

was thus always open to strangers,—not simply open that they might come in and say their prayers alone, but open that they might warm their feet, and read the *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, or the *Century*, or the *Journal of Missions*, and that they might talk with other people like themselves. Suppose such a boy or girl turned up in a strange city,—missed a railroad connection, if you please,—and had to spend the evening there. I think the boy or girl would be apt to walk along the street, looking for the sign of the one door which is never shut, of the one place where there is always a welcome. And I think that the fact that the church offered such a welcome to people on week-days would make the service of the church much more natural and homelike when the bells rang on Sunday.

I have, in other places, at much greater length, attempted to carry out the details of such work of welcome as this, and to such essays of mine I must refer anybody who is interested. What follows is addressed simply to the lay boards of management who direct our large churches. I wish they could be made to understand how much more useful these churches would be if the suggestion made in the next paragraph were attended to.

VI. I know of no church, Protestant or Catholic, in any large American city, which has nearly force enough, in its regular ministry, for the work which it might easily do with the “plant” which it has in its share of real property. The church of which I am the minister could employ to advantage ten or twenty clergymen, where in fact it employs two. As for worship, every church might be open from sunrise on Sunday till late in the evening. As for charity and hospitality, its vestries, parlors, and other offices might be open from the first day of January till midnight on the 31st of December. Whenever a congregation likes to try such an experiment as this, I think that the congregation will be strong in its pecuniary force, and it will gather in a sympathetic body of Christians, who mean to save the world by the Christian religion, and that it will answer your question how our churches can be made more useful.

EDWARD E. HALE.

THOSE who believe that human nature is perfectible, and that human society is progressive, can entertain no doubt that our churches may be made more useful. This verdict of a rational optim-

ism is confirmed by experience. Our churches have been improved in every respect. They are more useful to-day than ever before.

The first business of the church is to impress upon the minds of men the great facts of the spiritual realm. Its usefulness depends upon the success with which it fulfills this function. The church has a firmer grasp upon these great facts now than formerly and is able to set them forth more convincingly. The old notion was that the spiritual order was something wholly distinct from, and almost antithetical to, the moral and social order of this world; the new conception is that the spiritual order is realized in the moral and social order of the world, so that the great facts of reward and retribution are not merely facts of revelation, but facts of experience and observation. The new theology, therefore, as Dr. Munger has said, appeals to life continually; it finds in the experience of men and in the facts of history the sure witnesses to the truth of its message. The evidence on which it chiefly rests is evidence that no man can gainsay. Therefore it can speak with stronger emphasis, and can compel the attention of men to these great interests of life.

As an interpreter of life, the church is seen to wield an increasing influence. And its work must, in the nature of things, be more and more practical. The change in its conception of the spiritual order brings it into closer contact with the affairs of every-day life. It begins to see, as it never saw before, that Christianity is not exclusively a scheme for the transportation of a portion of the human race away from this world to a more congenial home beyond the skies, but a plan for the reorganization of life upon this planet; a plan that includes every department of human action—business, politics, society, art, education, amusement,—all the interests of life. As Dr. Henry Hopkins said so strongly in his recent sermon before the American Board of Missions, the great business of the church is to work for the embodiment of Christianity in the life of society. It is evident that in this conception, which is certainly gaining a firm hold of the thought of the leaders of the church to-day, the emphasis is shifted; the life that now is receives far more attention, as compared with the life that is to come, than was formerly the case. That the churches will be more useful as this conception gains clearness and strength cannot be doubted.

In its administration, as well as in its teaching, the church has

been increasing in usefulness, and there is every reason to expect that this improvement will continue. The methods of church work are far more effective now than they were in the boyhood of many of us. The Sunday-school is steadily gaining in efficiency; it has passed through the sophomoric period and is getting down to business; the young people are interested in the work of the church to an extent that was not dreamed of forty years ago; the social life of the church is cultivated with increasing success; and the missionary enterprises at our own doors and in distant places are pushed with growing enthusiasm. That this development of the active life of the church is to go forward is as certain as any future event can be.

If, now, it be asked in what particular directions the life and work of the church are likely to improve, these might be mentioned :

I. The preaching will improve. It will become less dogmatic and more spiritual. It will appeal, more and more, to man's own consciousness of need, and to those ineradicable instincts which testify of things unseen and eternal. The need of forgiveness, the need of guidance, the need of comfort and help—these are the perennial needs of human nature, and the pulpit will learn to bring man's need and God's free grace into closer relation. Doubtless, also, it will comprehend more and more clearly the truth that the kingdom of God is a social as well as a spiritual kingdom, and will give increased attention to the application of the Christian law to social questions.

II. The church will increase its usefulness by applying the law of Christ more vigorously to its own life. Especially necessary is this reformation in the management of the places of public worship. The church of God ought not to be a place where money can buy privilege. The distribution of the sittings in the churches upon competitive principles—the best seat going to the highest bidder—is an anomaly that needs correction. We revolt at simony in the pulpit, but we practise it all the while in the pews. The desire of families to have a definite place assigned to them is natural, but this assignment should be made on some principle that will give the man who pays ten dollars a year an equal chance with the man who pays a thousand dollars a year. If the thousand-dollar man will not contribute unless he can have his first choice, then let him hear the explicit words of the

great apostle: "Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right before God."

III. The usefulness of the churches would be greatly increased if they would frequently consult together respecting the work to be done in the field which they occupy in common, and would agree upon some simple principle of coöperation. They need not aim at organic unity, but they can certainly agree to keep out of one another's way, to consider one another's interests, and to behave like Christians in their relations with one another. Their usefulness is often sadly impaired by their unseemly and destructive rivalries. Not only the interior life of the churches needs to be more perfectly christianized, but their relations with one another would be greatly improved if they would remember, now and then, in the prosecution of their sectarian schemes, whose kingdom they are building and what is the law of the kingdom.

IV. The churches will be more useful in the time to come, if they will rely less upon missionary methods and more upon the method of colonization. I refer now, of course, to the work in the cities and the large towns of our own country, where the problem of evangelization is most urgent and most difficult. The plan of sending out a few workers from the parent church to gather a mission in one of the destitute districts, or of employing city missionaries and Bible-readers to do the work in these precincts, has, no doubt, accomplished some good, but it is wholly inadequate to the work in hand. The labor of these single-handed missionaries makes little impression upon the mass; nor is it a "mission" that these people need. The church must send forth strong colonies of its best families to plant churches in these dark places. The problem of city evangelization cannot be solved by "mission" churches or Sunday-schools. We may send missionaries to China and Zulu-land, because we cannot go ourselves; but to our neighbors in the down-town wards we can go ourselves; hired emissaries will not answer the purpose, because they cannot possibly convey the one essential gift for which these churchless multitudes are suffering—and that is our love. We must carry that ourselves. A few self-denying workers who go down to the neglected district once a week to sustain by their labors the Sunday-school or the Gospel-meeting can accomplish more, of course, than the single-

handed city missionary ; but their interest is only temporary ; their membership is elsewhere ; they cannot do that permanent, institutional work which the neighborhood needs. That can only be done by a church of strong, intelligent, enthusiastic Christian disciples, planted in the midst of this district, studying its social conditions patiently and, working its leaven into the lump by daily contact and association. Not missions, but colonies, will be the watchword of the church militant in the next generation.

V. I will name only one other way in which it seems to me that many of our churches might be made more useful, and that is by the employment of additional pastoral labor. It is true that the work of the church ought to be done by the members of the church ; the great labor of evangelization must be performed by them, and cannot be delegated to others without infinite loss to them ; but there is in every large church a great deal of pastoral labor—small details of superintendence and administration—that nobody can perform except the pastor and that he, with the burdens on his hands, is compelled to neglect. The more complex the organization of the church becomes, the more interests there are to be watched and guarded ; and the man who tries to be a teacher finds it impossible to attend to them all. A little additional outlay for assistance would greatly increase his efficiency.

WASHINGTON GLADDEN.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

I.

THE CLAIM OF "REALISM."

ONE of the most curious phases of our modern literature is the claim put forth in behalf of a so-called "school" of fiction, that theirs is the only literary art worthy the name, because they alone depict "real" life. For this reason they have arrogantly dubbed themselves "realists," while all those whose methods they disapprove are denounced as "idealists." The distinction which is attempted thus to be drawn is a purely fanciful one. The real difference lies deeper. The realist regards art as a means for producing uncomfortable, unpleasant impressions. He paints weakness, indecision, and pettiness; traces the growth of an unworthy sentiment or the aimless *ennui* of a purposeless existence, and says this alone is real life. He depicts suffering and cowardice, duplicity and despair, but omits hope, aspiration, and triumph. He says that the heroic is exceptional, abnormal, and, therefore, unreal; but weakness, self-distrust, and self-consciousness—these are universal, normal, real.

Heretofore, it has been deemed the highest art to contrast in fiction the good and bad, like light and shade in painting. Heroism has been a favorite theme, not only because it is a grand ideal, but because the world needs the stimulus of grand example. The good and the true have been depicted, not only because they are to be found in life, but because they are the best things to be found there, and it is desirable that one should contemplate, not merely a picture of the average life, as the average eye sees it, but also should apprehend the best life and the noblest, in contrast with the weakest, if not the worst.

Our literary "realism," so-called, has set up a false standard of the truth. Only the average, every-day, common-place happenings, it says, are true. They alone are "real," healthful, fit material for fictitious art. If the exceptional is used, it must be rendered gross, common, or repulsive. Who shall strike the average? Who shall say what is every-day life? Who shall separate the exceptional from the common-place?

But even if this might be done, the distinction is still a false one. The exceptional is just as much a part of truth as the common-place. But are heroism and truth and love exceptional? Is he that paints the portrait of beauty without emphasizing her imperfections any more an "idealist" than he who emphasizes her defects without depicting her beauty?

On the other hand, the "realist" strives to maintain his exclusive right to the claim that he is the only truth-teller in fiction by drawing a line betwixt himself and the so-called "naturalist." The real distinction may be stated in a sentence. The "realist" keeps to what he deems a middle course. He paints neither the highest good nor the worst evil. He keeps the middle of the street and never sees what is in the gutter. This, he says, is true—this is real life and everything else is false. The naturalist, on the other hand, believes in high lights and deep shadows. He is sometimes in the palace and anon in the gutter. Truth, he says, does not lie midway between extremes, but embraces the antipodes. The absence of vice or virtue is not life, but the union and contrast of them. So what the "realist" so carefully avoids, the "naturalist" paints with unflagging zeal. Nothing is too high or too low, too fair or too foul, for him. He paints vice in the nude and virtue in its loveliest colors. M. Zola is the type of the "naturalist"; Mr. Howells the head of the "realists."