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for all concerned ; but that, again, is a detail, and not the main question.

Only recently an honoured and valued physician of one of our large hospitals sent in his resignation to the committee, on the plea that his advancing years rendered such a step expedient, and would afford an opening for a younger man. The committee saw the point, and with great regret accepted the resignation. We can appreciate the thoughtfulness that prompted this act of self-sacrifice, and I instance it just to show that the scheme advocated in this paper is no new one, although its application may be so.

Doubtless there may be many details and sidelights that would have to be dealt with, and many obstacles and objections met. The greatest obstacle of all would be prejudice. It affects a clergyman's position and finances. It proposes radical changes which would be looked at with suspicion and dread. The subject may be dismissed as utopian and visionary. Still, nevertheless, I am persuaded that it is one that must come to the front eventually, and, if so, its discussion and ventilation may have its value in helping to form opinions upon this aspect of Church reform.

GEORGE S. BREWER.



## THE SPIRITUAL WORTH OF THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL WORK.

**T**H**ERE** is no doubt that "social work" occupies a large share of the Church's activity in the present day. In contrast with what was done even twenty years ago we are able to show a great advance in the variety of our organizations for influencing the social life of the community and in the energy with which they are conducted. We have a broader conception of the Church's duty, while the desire to discharge it is unmistakable. We all agree nowadays that Christianity must touch every part of a man's life. The old dualism is vanishing. The Christian vocabulary has no longer any use for the word "secular."

Among parochial organizations designed to bring the Church's influence to bear on the social life of the community, there will generally be found Men's and Lad's Clubs. I venture to suggest that though these may be necessary, they are for the most part conducted in a way which is prejudicial to the best interests of those for whose welfare they are designed, while they exhaust the efforts of the Church and

prevent the clergy from giving their time and energies to matters which should have the first claim on their attention.

A Working Men's Club is very attractive to most of the younger clergy. It is interesting in itself, and it affords the satisfaction of feeling that one is "doing something for the men." The clergy spend an astonishing amount of time and energy in the management of these organizations. We do not doubt that in cases here and there special circumstances may justify this activity, but on any wide examination of the results obtained one is compelled to come to the conclusion that our Men's Clubs, as a rule, are singularly ineffective, if we regard them as means to promote the spiritual interests of the members. These clubs are open to any man who likes to join them. Rejection of a candidate for entrance is practically unknown; the clergyman is only too glad to welcome a man of unsatisfactory reputation in the hope of doing him good. But those in charge are nearly always disappointed. In some cases a club may help to keep a man from the public-house, but experience shows that this is rare. Even when so much is achieved, its very success seems to prevent further progress. The club is regarded as an end in itself. Its success is measured by the number of members it can boast, their proficiency in billiards, chess, or cards. Its work is based on the understanding that the members get a good deal for their money. Worldly wisdom is a valuable asset, but it is not religion. The fact is, that the dynamic which carries a man to a state of respectability and leaves him there is not a spiritual force.

Looking at the result of our club-work in its most favourable light, we can claim nothing more than that it provides a number of men, rarely of the poorest class, with cheap amusement. That is the sum of it. The members for the most part have nothing to do with the Church; they show no consciousness of the fact that the club has any connection with a religious body at all. As a rule, a Church club for working men is practically a non-religious organization for the amusement of more or less respectable artisans. This is not a bad thing in itself, but it cannot justify the expense of so much time and energy on the part of the clergy. I am trying to take the most favourable view of our clubs, but I would not dissent from Mr. Charles Booth's estimate of their value. "The open clubs," he says, "aim at bringing men under the influence of the Church; but in this they always fail, and in consequence many of them have been given up. The greater the effort in this direction the greater the failure, till, finally, the atmosphere of the club may become positively hostile to the Church."

Every day we are reminded of the dearth of the clergy and of their growing indifference to learning; yet here we have a waste of clerical energy which is amazing. In times of transition like ours the clergy, who are the responsible teachers of their people, have need to give special attention to the trend of modern thought and all that science and criticism have to say about Christianity. The thoughtless repetition of time-worn phrases, or the eager cries of party shibboleths, have no value. They may lull men to sleep or arouse them to fanaticism, but they will neither confirm the faithful nor appeal to those outside. Probably there never was a time in the history of the Church of England when the clergy had a greater opportunity for influencing the religious life of the community than that which is theirs at the present moment. If they are to use it they will have to spend more time in their studies, and in quiet thought and prayer gain the knowledge and power to guide men in the perplexities which are the inevitable accompaniments of such a reconstruction of Christian thought and method as that which is taking place before our eyes. Among all the claims made upon the clergy in the present day this is the most pressing and the most important. They can no longer be charged with inactivity, but they have need to ask themselves whether they are justified in pleading the pressure of club management as an excuse for disregarding the more pressing duties of their office. Even when it is claimed that clubs teach the members to be respectable, to amuse themselves without gambling, and to be temperate, it is to be doubted whether we are not mistaking causes. Men of the class from which our Men's Clubs are generally composed are gradually becoming more orderly and temperate, but many influences are bringing this about—education, trades' unions, and the habits of thrift and discipline they teach. We may easily overrate the influence of our clubs in this direction.

Have we, then, to shut them up and cease to be interested in the men? By no means. I honestly believe that if the clergyman who manages a club were to hand over his charge to laymen, and would devote one evening a week to invite (say) three or four men to his house for a quiet friendly chat (and smoke), leading the conversation by no means always to religious matters, and yet not hesitating to introduce such subjects when occasion arises, he would do more good than can be done by spending six nights a week in a club.

I venture to suggest that we have been misled by the methods adopted by the different settlements in London. A visitor to these institutions must be impressed by what we must call the excessive attention given by the workers to

merely amusing those who attend their clubs. One is almost inclined to call our settlements societies designed for the amusement of the masses. This is all very well, but it is not spiritual work, and it has nothing to do with Christianity as such. There are in London settlements which are avowedly non-Christian, and it is difficult to discern any difference in their methods or their results from others connected with our Church, and conducted under the supervision of the clergy. To be content with this is to forfeit the *raison d'être* of our existence.

Our present attempts at social work in this direction hold the same relation to effective social progress as the reading habits of the community do to serious thought. Just as through the advance in elementary education more people read now than formerly, so in the development of our social ideals the clergy are more actively employed in social work than before; but just as elementary education has done little more than give the reading public a taste for light magazines and sensational novels, so we have done little more than amuse our club members without making any real progress in the higher life of the community. We are deluding ourselves by our activity, while we are neglecting the real problems. We gain little by teaching men to spend their evenings at a club; the real task is to teach them to spend their time at home. This is what we ought to do, and in order to do it we shall have to pay more attention to the housing problem, the unemployed, the licensing question, and the gambling evil. Our working men's clubs scarcely touch these things.

We must change our methods. We must begin with the spiritual. Everything must flow from that. We shall be miserably deceived if we think we can work from the club to the Church; it must be from the Church to the club. I would suggest (and the suggestion has the recommendation of success) that men's classes should be started for the study of the Bible, or for the instruction in questions of real moment in our religious or social life, and that they should be the nucleus of our social work. The clergy will be able to read more—indeed, they will be compelled to do if their classes are to succeed—and they will have the satisfaction of knowing that they are busy in the work for which they were ordained, and supplying what men most need.

I have not much to say about our work among lads. Here, too, I believe it is necessary to insist that regular attendance at a Bible Class, or some other directly spiritual meeting or Church service, should be the *sine quâ non* of membership in the club or brigade.

If it should be said that such a rule as this is taking an

unfair advantage of the men or boys by forcing religion upon them, I have to reply that my suggestion is based on the same principle as that which justifies the existence of our voluntary schools. We insist that a child attending our schools shall be present at the religious instruction, saving the conscience clause, and this, of course, one would always respect.

To put the matter in a sentence: Our hopes of social regeneration cannot be realized save through spiritual agencies.

I turn to the problem of the poorest class—the submerged tenth—with great misgivings. I believe with our present methods it is impossible to make this lowest strata sufficiently Christian to become regular members of any Church. This derelict portion of the community lacks the opportunities of decency, even if it should desire it. That there is Christian feeling, and not seldom real nobility of character, among the poorest, those who know them best can testify; but the best elements are not in alliance with the Church. Dolling's dictum remains true: the Church of England has never really touched the masses. Our services are not for them. It is grotesque to invite an uneducated slum-dweller to our matins and evensong. They are not composed in a language "understood of the people." We must have simpler services. We must, if necessary, sacrifice liturgical dignity for the sake of spiritual effectiveness. It is true that nothing really satisfactory can be expected till we have induced our municipal authorities to make slum life impossible by improved and cheaper means of communication with districts outside London. The progress already made in this direction is one of the most encouraging features of modern social reform. But here also we are in danger of giving too much time and energy to what one may call secondary means of influencing the community. We must emphasize those which are primary, and directly, openly, obviously bring men into the spiritual sphere. That is what we stand for, and this is what they really need.

I may be permitted to refer to Dr. Bigg's new book, "The Church's Task under the Roman Empire." It is a striking study of the Church's attempt to evangelize the Græco-Roman world, and brings out with characteristic force and freshness the source of Christianity's first triumphs. Dr. Bigg points out that the peculiar property of the Gospel was the Cross. The preachers of the new faith met the social and religious problems of their day by proclaiming the message of redemption. After all these centuries we have discovered no better way to make men Christians. Certainly the short and easy methods of "the gospel of clubs" is no substitute for the **old method**. No doubt these organizations have their purpose,

but we have erred in expecting them to do what they never have done and never can do. Their value as agents for promoting the spiritual life of the community is insignificant, and experience has taught us that they offer no adequate compensation for all the trouble and expense which their management has entailed on the clergy. It is time to return to the only real method : we must emphasize the redemptive power of the Gospel of Christ. This is our starting-point.

S. KIRSCHBAUM.

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### CLERICAL WORK IN TOWN AND COUNTRY.

THOSE who have had any lengthened experience of a clergyman's life and work in town and country parishes know well how different they are from each other. Our aims and principles should, of course, be the same in both ; but our methods in carrying out the work have to be adapted to the habits and idiosyncrasies of the people and to the surroundings of each place. As one who, after many years' experience of town work, has since been for a considerable time Vicar of country cures, the writer may venture to offer his brethren a few reminiscences of his past.

In reference to a ministry in London and large towns, it is obvious that it involves a far heavier strain upon the mental, and to some extent the physical, powers than does that in the country, and that it taxes to the utmost the energies of even a strong man in the prime of life. But there is the stimulating sense of dealing collectively with large numbers of our fellow-men, although not as closely and personally as we could desire. The incessant demands on our sympathy and interest call forth all that is best in a man, and, if his strength be equal to them, make the work a real pleasure. There are the large congregations in the Church on Sundays, intelligent and thoughtful, and often responsive and sympathetic, followed, or preceded, by the numerous companies of earnest communicants that from time to time gather round the Holy Table of their Lord. The Sunday-schools, (if not always in these days the day-schools), with their well-appointed and well-taught classes and bands of devoted teachers, are centres of deepest interest to the clergy, not to speak of the teachers' meetings, where they train and assist them in their preparation for their duties. Then there are also the various useful institutions which cluster round every well-worked parish, such as mothers' meetings, Temperance societies, Bands of Hope,