

The Club Smoking Room

By HAVANA.

Parsons and Politics.

I WAS much amused," began the cynic, "to notice Mr Fisher's diatribes against the Presbyterian Church. The main indictment seems to be that the churches in General have not left the Word of God to serve tables. He has apparently never read the Acts of the Apostles, or he would have known that the Apostles themselves considered that the serving of tables formed no part of their work. He is blaming the churches for following the teaching laid down in the Bible. In olden time people objected to the clergy interfering in politics; nowadays they object because the clergy are not pious. In olden time people objected to the clergy have taken no part in various political movements, and have not actively supported Mr Fisher's own party. Mr Reid would probably object to them because they had not declared themselves in favour of his fiscal policy, and Mr Massey might say that they held heretical opinions on land tenure. If we follow Mr Fisher's lead we might each upbraid the Churches for not following our own pet political fad. The old idea was that men went to church to worship God, the modern idea seems to be that we should go to church to worship the Federal Labour Ministry."

A Materialistic Age.

"It is curious," commented the M.P., "how much we bend to worship the material and how little importance we attach to the spiritual. The fault of many churches is that they attach too much importance to political movements. They are subscribing to the modern heresy that you can make men saints by Act of Parliament. As a matter of fact, legislation can do very little, and what little it can do is based on the fact that public opinion is behind our laws. And why is public opinion behind them. I maintain it is because the churches have roused the Christian conscience of the nation. We are what we are by reason of our nineteenth centuries of religious teaching, and our laws would be useless without that. We live in an age when it is the fashion to worship the working-men, we make him our idol and expect the prophets of God to bow the knee to our modern Baal. It will be an evil day when the churches neglect their high spiritual mission to become medicine men to this latter day fetish."

The Socialist's Reply.

"Not at all," answered the Socialist. "The first duty of the churches should be to protect the poor against the rich. They should devote themselves to seeing that proper homes are provided for our workers, to denouncing all systems of trusts, corners and combines that tend so disastrously to raise the price of food for our toiling millions. We want every pulpit to ring with anathemas against our present system of land tenure, which permits a few to own thousands of acres whilst others have not a patch of ground to call their own. The working man would go to church if he could hear whole-hearted denunciations of the rich, but of what use to him are tiresome expostulations of what preachers call the plan of salvation. The plan of salvation he wants to hear about is some plan that will give him shorter hours, better food, better clothes, a better home to live in, something, in short, that will take money from the greedy and selfish rich and give it to the deserving poor. The modern

clergy don't follow the apostles. The apostles didn't wear top-hats and frock coats like some of those who claim to be their successors."

Belts and Braces.

"Neither," suavely remarked the cynic, "did the apostles wear belts or braces, and if we followed their example in this respect we would not have more time to support labour legislation; we would have less. The bulk of our energies would be devoted to supporting other things of more immediate consequence to ourselves. If we are to have churches where the working man can listen to denunciations of the rich, why not also have churches where the rich can listen to denunciations of the working man? The middle classes could attend each church in turn, and feel a grateful glow in reflecting that they belonged to neither class, and therefore had a monopoly of all the virtues. We could have a new nomenclature for all the various sects. Instead of Methodists and Baptists we could have the single tax church and the freetrade church. The Bible could be rewritten to suit different political parties, and doubtless the prayer book could be suitably revised. Personally, I consider that Mr Fisher has paid the highest pos-

against this unjust state of things; we want them to aid a movement that seeks to abolish sin and suffering from the earth. Surely that is part of their mission. But they stand aloof, they are afraid to identify themselves with us, and so we also stand aloof from them. We are seeking to upset the established order of things, to sweep away in one set all the old, wicked system of private gain and consequent oppression, and to establish in its stead a system of equal rights and equal wealth for all. When the golden age we are working for arrives, we shall look back with wondering and pitiful eyes on the dark ages of capital and private property. The churches stand for the established order of things, and as such we condemn them and seek to overthrow them."

What is Christianity?

"The duty of the Church," said the padre, "is to preach Christianity, not the political fad of the moment. We are concerned with the only real reform—the reform of the heart. If men are kind and considerate and humane in themselves, that is something gained for all time. If we try and make men kind and considerate and humane by legislative enactments, we shall fail, and fail miserably. It is said that you can drive a coach and four through any Act of Parliament, but you can't drive any coach through the dictates of the Christian heart. Men go to church to worship God, and to give Him thanks, and to pray to Him. If they go to church

A SONG OF EMPIRE.

The strange disappearance of the well-known poet, Mr. John Davidson, gives a peculiar interest to the last poem received by his publisher, Mr. Grant Richards, from him. It is entirely different to anything Mr. Davidson has done before, and will, no doubt, appeal to a far greater circle than the works on which rest John Davidson's claim to literary honours.

It is published at a particularly appropriate moment—just when New Zealand's generous gift of Dreadnought to the Motherland, and Australia's offer of similar aid is the chief theme of conversation in the Old Country, when a really Imperial spirit pervades the land, and the world without is receiving the most convincing proofs of the solidarity of the British Empire.

By permission of the publisher I am able to give Mr. Davidson's "Song of the Empire" in full. It was written, Mr. Richards tells me about a month ago, and in a covering letter the author said of it, "I considered that it is to be sung, and should therefore be simple and bold."

I.
The character and strength of us,
Who conquer everywhere;
We sing the English of it thus,
And bid the world beware;
We bid the world beware.
The perfect heart and will,
That dare the utmost men may dare,
And follow freedom still.
Sea-room, land-room, ours, my masters, ours,
Held in hand with destiny, and first among
the Powers!
Our boasted Ocean Empire, sir, we boast
of it again,
Our Monarch, and our Ruler, and our
Women and our Men!



CLINCHING IT.

Wearily Hostess (thankful to get rid at last of complacent bore): "Well, good-night, if you must go. Come and see us again, won't you?"
Complacent Bore: "Delighted! What evening shall we say?"

—"London Opinion."

sible tribute to the churches. It shows that in the opinion of one of our foremost political leaders the churches have been true to their mission of preaching the gospel, and have refused to be turned aside by the siren songs of modern Labour leaders.

The Duty of the Churches.

"All the same," replied the previous speaker, "it is clearly the duty of the churches to speak with no uncertain voice on such subjects as social oppression and injustice. We believe that all evil comes from private property. Theft, murder, cruelty all arise from the lust of gain. Thousands starve that the few may revel in luxury. Women and children toil in factories for a mere pittance that the capitalist may increase his already immense hoard. We want the churches to help us in our crusade

only in the expectation of hearing fiery denunciations of this or that existing institution, they had better stop away. What spiritual gain is there in a political tirade? Mr. Fisher has, indeed, though quite unwittingly, paid us the highest compliment that any man could pay. I rejoice to think that in the opinion of so eminent a judge we have not bowed ourselves down in the temple of Rimmon. But we have been to blame. We have obscured the idea of worship and laid too much stress on preaching and parish organisation. We have coquetted with political movements, and made men think that we wanted people to go to church for our own sakes. If man neglects public worship, the loss is solely his own. I would sooner see every pew empty than feel I had filled a church to overflowing by substituting the worship of man and the law of man for the worship of God and the law of God."

II.
The pillars of our Empire stand
In forgotten graves,
We build denunciations on the land,
And greatness on the waves;
Our Empire on the waves,
Established firm and sure,
And founded deep in ocean's caves,
While honour shall endure,
Sea-room, land-room, honourably ours,
Held in hand with destiny, and first among
the Powers!
Our boasted Ocean Empire, sir, we boast
of it again,
Our ancient Isles, our Lands afar, and all
our loyal Men!

III.
Our flag, on every wind unfurled,
Proclaims from sea to sea
A future and a nobler world,
Where men and thoughts are free;
Our men, our thoughts are free,
Our wars are waged for peace;
We stand in arms for liberty,
Till bonds and bondage cease.
Sea-room, land-room, ours, appointed ours,
Cousins of our calling and the first among
the Powers!
Our boasted Ocean Sovereignty, again and
yet again,
Our Council, and our Conduct, and our
Armaments and Men!