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Notes of the Week.

THE *British Medical Journal* publishes an article making some startling allegations about the increase of drunkenness among women during recent years in various countries. All other countries put together it, says, are far behind Britain in this unenviable notoriety. Whereas twenty years ago, we are told, but few women entered public-houses, it was now a common sight to see more women than men standing at the bars.

THE Council of the Churches represents six of the largest denominations of Protestants in New South Wales, and was found to deal specially with Sunday desecration. By its action, Sunday concerts in Sydney were declared to be illegal, and J. H. Want's Sunday desecration Bill killed. The members of the council are appointed by their respective denominations; and there must be general consent among them as to the expediency of any proposed action before anything is done.

ALLAHABAD is the centre of the Bible activity in the Hindi language, the vernacular of some 80,000,000, and likely to become still more widely spread, and the issues of the auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society there have been rapidly increasing within recent years; last year they were 93,000 copies—an advance of nearly 35,000 on those of 1890. The circulation is likely to be much advanced by the new portable edition of the Hindi Bible instead of the bulky three-volume book which preceded it, and by a handsome and cheap edition of the New Testament.

THE London Theological College was opened recently for session 1892-93, the introductory lecture being delivered, in the presence of the students and a goodly gathering of outside friends, by the Rev. Dr. John Gibb, Professor of New Testament Literature and Church History. Principal Dykes, D.D., presided, and in a brief address paid a high tribute of respect to the memory of the late Dr. Donald Fraser, who had rendered essential service to the College as Convener of its Committee; also Dr. Dykes intimated that the Session began with twenty-one students, of whom five were fishermen, a smaller number than usual. Of the five, four were University graduates, and the fifth would proceed shortly to his degree. Professor Gibb then proceeded with his lecture, the subject of which was "St. Francis of Assisi and his Order." He dealt with St. Francis, not as a saint of the Roman calendar, but as a follower of Christ and the saint of humanity.

THE fears of divided action in the church of the late Mr. Spurgeon, it is said, have been allayed for the present. Dr. Pierson is to take the pulpit till June of next year. Mr. Thomas Spurgeon is to follow, not as pastor but as supply for six months. The interval will give ample time for considering the position and what is best to be done. The meeting at which this decision was arrived at was a private one, but there was enough frankness to create warmth. Dr. Pierson has repeated his adhesion to infant baptism, and he is altogether shut out of the pastorate by the trust-deeds of the Church. This leaves the field quite open to choose Mr. Thomas Spurgeon or another as preaching colleague to Dr. James Spurgeon. There is no reason why the present conciliatory arrangement should not be repeated, and, with Dr. Spurgeon to rule, Dr. Pierson and Mr. Thomas Spurgeon take winter and summer charge of the pulpit respectively. The latter has no settled pastorate in New Zealand, whither he has gone; he is occupied with evangelistic work under the auspices of the Union of that colony.

THE *Christian Leader* says: Edinburgh is fortunate in its librarian of her Free Library. Mr. Hew Morrison is not a man who knows only the outsides of books, an official of step-ladders and presses. He has kept his eyes open, and to the literary society

of the Laurieston Place U.P. Church he revealed his opinions of books and their readers. The position of librarian is no sinecure. The transactions over the counter during the two years the library has been opened have averaged 400 an hour. The books taken out have been classified thus: Fiction, 684,000, juvenile literature, 255,000; general literature, 169,000, history and travel, 135,000; science and art, 119,000, then a great drop to religion, 52,000, poetry, 32,000, sociology, 25,000; poor philosophy bringing up the rear with 11,000. Thus fiction and juvenile stories account for more than half of the whole books issued, religion standing at three and a-half per cent., as compared with sixty-three for the two main classes of fiction. Every book in the library was read on an average thirty-four times. Mr. Morrison showed that the Edinburgh Free Library was just twice as well used as the next best in the United Kingdom, Birmingham and Liverpool trying for the second place with eighteen readings for each book.

A TWO DAYS' congress of ministers and elders, representatives of the Church of Scotland in the northern countries was held in Inverness lately. There was a considerable attendance, several leading ministers from the south being present. Public interest has centred in the discussion on the Highland land question. Speeches sympathetic with the crofters were made by Rev. Dr. Mackenzie, of Kingussie; Rev. Mr. Morrison, of Kintail; Rev. Mr. Thomson, of Strath; Rev. Dr. Milne, of Arde; and Rev. Mr. Thomson, of Fodderty. Rev. Dr. Norman Macleod, in closing the discussion, admitted that the Church of Scotland had not shown that sympathy with the land movement which it ought to have shown. It was stated at the congress, that while over the four northern Synods and the Presbytery of Abertarf the population had increased since 1871 two per cent., the communicants had increased since the parliamentary return of 1878 eleven per cent., and Christian liberality had increased between 1878 and 1891 fifty-seven per cent.

A WRITER in the *British Weekly* says: The conscientious care with which the late Principal Cairns did all his work is touchingly exemplified in his new volume of sermons. He was re-writing them for the purpose of publication when interrupted by death, and how great the change made is seen by comparing the discourse on "the Blessedness of the Dead in Christ," with its original form as published in the funeral sermon for the late Principal Harper. There is another instance still more striking. I distinctly remember Dr. Cairns preaching in Edinburgh, on "Paul's witness for Christ before Agrippa." He then took the view that the ordinary reading, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," was correct. But in the final form of the sermon he says: "Looking at the whole position in the light of recent critical discussion, I think that the evidence for Agrippa being seriously impressed is much smaller than it was once supposed to be, and also that we cannot confidently say that Paul dealt with him as more impressed than he was willing to confess."

THE Presbytery of London, England, held a Conference on Church Extension, which was opened by Sir Geo. Bruce, who related what had been done by the Presbytery in the past, and urged greater efforts in the same direction for the future. Rev. A. Jeffrey, who followed, expressed dissatisfaction with the Church's slow growth since the union of 1876; and suggested that the Synod should be overturned to form a new Church Building Fund on a large scale, and that the local committee should carry out its church extension work on more comprehensive and statesmanlike lines. He also held that the Church to be successful must put herself in close touch with the people and with the great social and economic questions that were affecting the age. Mr. Robert Whyte supported, in a vigorous speech, the main contention of the previous speaker, and condemned the past policy of the Church Extension Committee in confining its work so much to

wealthy suburbs, to the neglect of districts inhabited by artisans. The Conference was continued by Mr. Walter Pope, Revs. James Paterson, Wm. Harris and others.

THE New York *Independent* says: What the Synod of New York has done with reference to the Briggs case before the New York Presbytery is to refuse to interfere in any way at the present stage of the trial. The complaint to the Synod was taken on behalf of Dr. Briggs against the ruling of the Moderator of the Presbytery, to the effect that the dismissal of the case against Professor Briggs did not necessarily put an end to the Prosecuting Committee. That Committee was really, according to the ruling, an independent body representing the Presbyterian Church. This is the view which the General Assembly seemed to take of the matter when it instructed the Presbytery to proceed with the trial of the accused professor. The Synod does not say whether the Prosecuting Committee has or has not a legal standing under the Constitution of the Church. It neither accepts nor dismisses the complaint, but simply declares that it is inexpedient to take action at present, holding that the complainants have not yet exhausted their rights in the Presbytery, and that after action has been had in the Presbytery the complainants will still have opportunity, by appeal or complaint, to bring their case again before the Synod. This seems to us to be the correct judicial view to take of the matter. While partisans may try to make it appear that the sentiment of the Synod is for or against Dr. Briggs, we prefer simply to believe that the Synod did not look at the matter from a partisan standpoint at all, but judged the matter fairly according to the Constitution of the Church. If the friends of Dr. Briggs went to the Synod hoping to secure partisan advantage it is quite certain that they have failed. The only course left to the Presbytery now is to proceed to dispose of the case.

IN an article on the attitude of the Church to the Labour Question the Belfast *Witness* says: One of the effects of the democratic tendency of our time is the new interest which the Church, as a whole, is taking in the social well-being of the masses. Mr. Keir Hardie and Mr. Ben Tillett discuss the labour question from the platform of the Congregational Union, the Pan-Presbyterian Council, in the session just drawn to a close, varied the high philosophical and theological arguments with excursions into the domain of practical problems, and even such an exclusive body as the Anglican Establishment has, at its recent Congress in Folkestone, delivered itself on one of the burning questions of the hour. This is as it should be. The Church has too long stood aloof from the social side of the workman's life, has urged upon him the duty of getting his soul saved, but has not taken a living interest in his temporal concerns. It has always shown itself willing to act the part of a ghostly confessor, while it has neglected the great work of creating a strong manly self-reliant character among the poor. As a consequence, there has been admitted a general revolt of the lower half of the working classes against the Church. "If the parson does not understand me on week-days, he is equally stupid on Sundays," so the English workingman argues, and not unnaturally, considering his small logical equipment. And so we hear of empty churches and a low state of religion. We are glad to see that the various sections of the Christian Church are rising to discharge their duty in the matter. Let us admit frankly that the difficulties are immense. It must ever be kept in mind that the Church is a spiritual society, and exists for spiritual ends. This is the end for which she lives—to make men like Jesus Christ. But man is not spirit merely; he has a body as well; and if he is to be reached, it will not be by ignoring the facts, or by any ultra-spiritualism which maims and despises human nature. Here in Belfast we have vast numbers of men and women, nominally Presbyterian, who never cross the threshold of any church. If our Church will not grapple with this problem and soon, she will find that others, of no friendly aspect to her or to her aims, will do the neglected work.