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Notes of the Week.

PROFESSOR HENRY DRUMMOND says that when he was a student at Edinburgh University, the typical Christian was a man that decamped at the end of the session without paying his bills. The prayer-meeting was attended by about half a dozen, and every man in it was worse than another in dufferism. Now the Christians at the university were the cream.

DR. PARKER writes to the *Idler*: "I hate smoking. From end to end it is a nuisance. It ends in cancer, apoplexy, bad temper, bankruptcy and almost in hydrophobia. It is an invention of the devil. It is the pastime of perdition. No dog smokes. No bird pines for tobacco. No horse is a member of a pipe club. No intelligent person ever puts a cigar into his mouth. The whole idea of smoking must be condemned as atheistical, agnostical, and infinitely detestable. Smoking has been abandoned by all reputable persons, and left to ministers, editors, poets and other intellectual confectioners."

AT the recent conference in Edinburgh of working men to discuss non-churchgoing, Councillor Chalmers, who presided, advocated an annual tenure for the eldership, a proposal that was loudly applauded. In many Congregational churches a similar office is triennial; the old men are generally re-elected. An idea of some value, however, was broached by Rev. J. M. Sloan, of the Chalmers Memorial Free Church, Edinburgh, in his forenoon sermon recently. Should there not, he asked, be more young men in the eldership so as to give the young of the congregation the feeling of being represented?

THE Rev. Dr. Gray, of Liberton, who gave an address at the last General Assembly in Montreal, speaking at the annual meeting of the Edinburgh association of the Irish Society (whose income has greatly fallen off during the past year), said that whilst the chief danger in Scotland was Rationalism there was also danger through Romanism, a danger that fantastic attacks on Popery tended to hide. It was all the greater, too, because there was so little fear. There was some among them who desired the exaltation of the clergy in their priestly powers and privileges and their constant intervention in the spiritual sphere between the soul and God.

AT the Free Church congress, which met in Manchester recently, the members numbered between 300 and 400. Its constitution was personal, but nearly all the leading dissenting bodies were represented. Mr. Henry Lee presided at the opening meeting, and Rev. Dr. Mackennal, Congregationalist, was secretary. The latter, in summing up a discussion in which several speakers emphasized the fact of the existence of great underlying unity along with the superficial diversity, called for some practical steps to be taken to put down the competition by the several Free Churches in the villages, while so many labourers were needed in the great towns and in the foreign field. The exclusion from the proceedings of the subject of religious equality evoked some protest.

THIS is how the correspondent of the *British Weekly* sums up the Manchester Free Church Congress: From the point of view of numbers the Congress was not a success. It was not the intention originally to admit the public to the galleries, but less than four hundred took tickets and the floor of the hall was never full. In fact the

Congress did not "catch on." I have little doubt that the attitude of the committee towards the consideration of Disestablishment had much to do with this. I think it would have been scandalous if in face of recent utterances of Church of England dignitaries and meetings we had been quiet, and we should have been if the Congress had had its way. On the one hand, the Congress has not been a conspicuous failure. On the other it has been anything but a great success.

THE public meeting in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, in connection with the Free Church Congress, writes a correspondent of the *British Weekly*, was very good. Dr. Monro Gibson's speech was very happy, and at the same time high toned. It was the most successful speech taken throughout. The chairman's speech was also excellent, and put pretty strongly his views on Disestablishment in Wales. Dr. Clifford's speech was good, but till towards the end not remarkable. But I was electrified by his words calling on Oliver Cromwell to awake. There was nothing like it in the whole Congress. The words themselves were not very remarkable, but the delivery of them was marvellous, and while the rest of his speech was not equal to Dr. Monro Gibson's, these words made it to me, at any rate, the speech of the evening. He and Dr. Maclaren impressed me most of all as men of genius. But I had to wait till near the end of Dr. Clifford's speech to discover his genius, while Dr. Maclaren's is visible in his face.

THE Rev. Dr. George Johnstone, Moderator of the English Presbyterian Synod, who took the chair at one of the meetings of the Manchester Free Church Congress, remarked that there were many questions in our time on which Christ while on earth gave no express opinion, but He was with them now as He was in the councils of the apostolic church. In a paper read by Rev. Dr. Randles, of Didsbury college, it was contended that the organic union of all the churches was of less importance than that they should cherish towards one another the unity of faith, of love, and of the Spirit. As things were, the former would invoke either ruinous internal schism or the reduction of doctrine and worship to a minimum in order to find a common basis of outward union—a price far too big for the boon. Rev. James Travis, president of the Primitive Methodist conference, who presided at one of the sittings, expressed the hope that one practical outcome of the Congress would be to prevent the scandalous waste of energy arising from overlapping in thinly populated districts. Town problems was the subject of a paper by Mr. Percy Bunting, editor of the *Contemporary Review*, who advocated the parochial system, and declared it would be more thorough if the churches would only combine. Alas, he exclaimed, that there could be no combination with the Anglican church! In a discussion that followed this and other papers, general approval was expressed of the parochial system.

THE Rev. Dr. Herber Evans, chairman of the Congregational Union, opening a discussion in the Manchester Free Church Congress, on the rural districts, expressed regret that in spite of all the lecturing not a single denomination was ceasing to build chapels in places where they were not needed. For want of action the speechifying was becoming ludicrous. The rural people were wide awake now. The old idea that religion was simply a help to get to heaven was dead, even in the country. A resolution was passed expressive of the gratification that the discussions had made plain that substantial unity of religious conception existing in the Evangelical Free Churches, so that they could look to one another for aid in opposing sacerdotalism and for encouragement in the face of the ecclesiastical and territorial persecution of Nonconformists in many back parts of the country. Rev. Hugh Price Hughes read a paper on social morality, in which he declared that on the subject of gambling the guidance of the Established church was "darkness visible."

That vice, once aristocratic now democratic, had the same relation to stealing that duelling had to murder. The sinfulness did not consist in the amount of money at risk. Every gambler was a mean thief, who in the better days that were coming would be debarred from holding public office and from entering respectable society. The axe would be laid to the very root of the upas tree if it were law that the publishing of betting odds in a newspaper would subject the editor to a month's imprisonment. Mr. Hughes also alluded to impurity, and called for the exclusion from the House of Commons of notoriously immoral men.

WE announce with much pleasure, says the *British Weekly*, that Dr. Marshall Lang, of the Barony Church, Glasgow, has been appointed Moderator of the next General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Dr. Lang, who is Norman McLeod's successor, has had a very distinguished career as preacher and pastor. Firmly evangelical but catholic in spirit, attached to his own church and yet ever ready to recognize good work and to cultivate friendship in sister churches, a hard worker, an eloquent preacher, and a pleasing writer, Dr. Lang has attracted to himself in a quite exceptional way the good will and respect of his countrymen. This honour has been thoroughly earned, and we wish Dr. Lang much comfort and happiness in his year of office. It is no less matter of satisfaction that Dr. Walter Smith will fill the Moderator's chair at the Free Church Jubilee Assembly. No honour was ever more worthily bestowed. Dr. Smith's genius as a poet, widely recognized as it is, will, as a good critic has said, be recognized more fully when it is a memory and no more a possession. But his life-work has been done with quiet and splendid fidelity as a Free Church minister, and to the admiration never grudged him has been added a confidence as universal and warm. It is singularly fitting that the Moderatorship should mark for the Free Church the end of the transition period and the beginning of a new era.

AN English contemporary has this to say of a distinguished Scotch-Australian, who has just passed away: By the death of Sir James MacBain, the city of Melbourne—and indeed the colony of Victoria—has lost one of the soundest and wisest of her public men just when it would seem he was most needed. Sir James was an excellent representative of the best type of the Scottish colonist. He carried with him the strong religious convictions of his early training in Invergordon and Inverness; and his widening experience of life only confirmed his devotion to what he felt to be his duty as a Christian citizen. He was uniformly successful as a merchant, banker and politician, and, although not a brilliant speaker, he rose steadily to the highest position attained by a Member of Parliament, viz., President of the Legislative Council. Probably no man bore honours more modestly than Sir James MacBain. He remained open to the claims of all who called on him for counsel, sympathy or assistance, and no really worthy cause was suffered to be put aside by pressure of official duties. His work in connection with the Presbyterian Church of Victoria—on many of whose committees he faithfully served—was unceasing, while he kept up his constant personal interests in the Toorak congregation, of which he was a founder and the senior elder. His catholic spirit took delight in other ways of doing good also, and public institutions had his support, not only in money, but in his presence and advocacy on their platforms. As the representative of the Legislative Council he had to appear before many audiences of most varied types, and at all public celebrations; but Sir James was universally recognized as distinctively a Christian man, and consequently his words of caution and prudence (and sometimes of quiet rebuke) were respectfully received, and had an influence denied to many more eloquent speakers. The strain of long-maintained public service rendered so generously has doubtless shortened his earthly career.