

the primary classes of our Sunday schools understand, or they will not understand, they prefer to mistake, so that they can misrepresent and deride. No man of ordinary intelligence, having an average acquaintance with Bible truth, could fail to conclude, upon hearing these men speak, or reading their writings, that they displayed either lamentable obtuseness or malignant perversity.

What do the pronounced Infidels of our day want to take from us, and what do they propose to give us? To take away our Bible, the light that has shone upon the path of a thousand generations; the truths that our fathers held, and held dearer than life itself; that enabled them to bear the trials and sorrows of their lot, to live manly lives, to walk abroad amid their fellows, and win from them the respect and esteem which only the honest and true can win; which has made weak, delicate, and fragile women with sublime endurance, patience and self-abnegation; has soothed the sufferings of death, and made the dying bed a triumphant overture to an everlasting Hallelujah.

For society at large, if we would see what the Gospel of Jesus Christ has done, we need but to go back to the advent of the Messiah. What was the state of the world then compared with what it is now? "The Doctrine (of the Cross) came to a very corrupt world, and acted (as we say) like a charm in changing it. Look into 'Juvenal's Satires,'—untranslatable as they are for our purer modern ears,—and then look at the Church which grew up in the world of which they afford a sketch."* Here is an argument that cannot be controverted. Personal faith, feeling, and experience may be sneered at as delusion and fanaticism, but the effect of the Gospel of Christ upon the world is one of the hardest of facts. It found the world, civilized, polished; æsthetically, highly developed; but a seething mass of vice and corruption, permeated by lewdness and falseness to its very core. Compare it now; imperfect as we all lament that it is, yet society is as paradise to hell of the first years of our era. What has made the mighty change, taught virtue, honesty, truth and charity? Is it not the Gospel? Yes, that and that alone. The world never saw in the olden days such large-hearted charity, such practical sympathy with the sufferings of others as it sees to-day. What has hegotten it? Christianity. It has even stepped in upon the field of battle, and until it shall abolish wars and fightings altogether, it has mitigated their horrors; the "Christian Commission" during the American rebellion, and the labours of the "Red Cross" corps in later European wars tell unmistakably of the spirit of our religion. A single number of the London "Christian," with its wonderful record of devoted labour, principally in the great metropolis, is an answer to all the Infidel books ever written, and all the Infidel speeches ever made. "Facts are stubborn things," and it will take more than the rhetoric, the sneers, and the ridicule of Col. Ingersoll and the like to convince a single thoughtful man that the world would be the better for giving up Christianity and putting unbelief in its place. What can Infidelity give us? What has it given us? What has it done? Whose lot has it cheered? Whose sorrows has it mitigated? What blessed, genial influence has it shed upon a single soul? What is its creed? Let its advocate reply "My creed is to be as happy as I can, and to make everybody else happy." Why, even this is borrowed from Christianity—the making of others happy is one of the fruits of the Gospel. But even here it is perverted, it is a gospel of selfishness. Happiness? yes! but of what kind? What happiness did the Infidels' god, Tom Paine, seek, and what happiness did he bring to others? Let us then cling to our truth, to the only source of true happiness for ourselves and blessings for others, and while we treat these scoffers with all courtesy and kindness, let us not give place to their teachings—no, not for a moment.

ALTON CHURCH COUNCIL.—By some oversight the name of the Rev. E. D. Silcox, of Stouffville, was

* Rev. J. F. Stevenson, in "Canadian Monthly" for April.

omitted from the list of ministers present, as published in the INDEPENDENT of last week.

THERE is one paragraph in the report of the Alton Church Council published last week, to which we would call special attention. It was resolved, on motion of the Rev. C. Duff, seconded by Rev. H. D. Powis, "That the Council, having heard a statement of the financial difficulties of the Alton Congregational church, consider their case such as to warrant an appeal for aid to the Congregational churches of the Dominion." We very heartily endorse this resolution. It is no use now trying to fix the blame of this difficulty on any one individual in particular, although there is little doubt that with wise, prudent counsel and guidance it would not have arisen. We have to look at the facts as they are to-day. These shew that the brethren at Alton need the help of the churches to lift the burden which now presses most grievously upon them, and which is completely paralyzing their true work. Their building is a superior one, and a small expenditure only is needed upon it to make it complete and fully usable, but there is a heavy mortgage debt and a floating debt in addition, and the interest on these is absorbing nearly the whole of their income. We ask, therefore, for the Alton church a prompt and hearty assistance. Mr. J. W. Harrison, the Secretary at Alton, will no doubt gladly receive any sums, or any received at the INDEPENDENT office will be duly acknowledged.

OBITUARY.

CAPT. GEORGE M'LEOD.

Deceased will be remembered by nearly all Congregational workers in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, as one of the most zealous and warm-hearted workers in behalf of our denominational progress in the Maritime Provinces. He was a man of active business habits, and for many years travelled about the world as a master of vessels. He carefully brought up a large family, all of whom are members of the Brooklyn Congregational church, and following their lamented father's example, are deeply interested in its general welfare. Both the church and neighbourhood feel acutely the loss they are called upon to sustain. To within about a week of Capt. McLeod's death, which took place on the 20th March, he was as active as usual in his attention to business. Inflammation of the lungs was the cause of death, in the seventieth year of his age. He departed with comparative ease and with a firm trust in the merits of the Saviour, who had been the ground of his hope through nearly the whole of his life.

REV. SIDNEY S. MURKLAND.

About the beginning of March there passed away at Farmville, Va., Rev. Sidney Smith Murkland, who more than thirty years ago occupied a position as Congregational minister at Liverpool, N.S. This was at a time when his influence on behalf of the denomination was exercised in a manner which has resulted in permanent benefit to our missionary work. During Mr. Murkland's labour at Liverpool in the years 1848-49, the late zealous and benevolent Mrs. Gorham was taken to her rest, and the college which bore her name was opened for the training of Congregational ministers. His life and work after leaving Nova Scotia can be best expressed from his own words, which are extracted from a letter written three years ago to Mr. Burnaby, of N. Brookfield, from Iredell, U.S., where he says: "It will be twenty-seven years since we last visited your house, and met with a number of friends, and baptized your two children. We had an interesting meeting; read Gen. xvii. and different parts of the New Testament bearing on the covenant of grace, the promise of God to believers and their children; also referred to some passages bearing on the mode of baptism. Were I to relate all that has befallen us during these twenty-seven years it would fill a small volume. Suffice it to say that 'goodness and mercy have followed us all the days,' etc. We came to this place in the first year of the war, and have remained here ever since.

By the 4th of February next I shall have finished my three-score years and ten. As I feel the infirmities of old age coming on, I want to retire from the active service of the pastorate. While I have strength left, I shall not cease to preach the blessed Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. We resided two years in Petersburg, and ten in Richmond, Virginia, also three at Hampton Sidney College; acted as evangelist and supplied vacant churches. Our two sons were students at Sidney College. We were called to the pastorate of Bethany Church in Oct. 1861, where we acted as such four years; then resigned to labour among the long neglected coloured people at the close of the war. You may be aware that I was a missionary among that class in Demerara for more than ten years in connection with the London Missionary Society, and I have always felt a deep interest in that poor neglected class. During the time of slavery we durst not teach them to read God's Holy Word; but as soon as slavery was at an end, I knew that these bad laws were at an end too. So I began in 1865 to instruct them. We were much opposed for some time, and I might say persecuted; but the more we were pounced upon, the more the Lord smiled. We went on in this good work, but did not organize a church among them until 1866. The first church, consisting of twenty-three members, was organized at our front porch, and the coloured elders and deacons were ordained. The same day the first Presbytery of coloured officers was also organized at our house by other ten ministers who had united with me in the work. There were no Congregationalists south of the Potomac when we came to reside in the south. Now in ten years we have 128 coloured churches among that long despised and neglected race. Truly my last days have been the most useful and happiest. Thanks to God for His grace that helped me to do what I have done. I am an unprofitable servant, and have not done the half that I should have done. Not unto me but unto Jesus be all the glory." A Richmond, Va., paper says of him: "He was a man of extraordinary vigour of mind and body, and this he offered up without reservation to the service of the Master; whether amid the busy activities of our western life, or as ministering to the crippled and impoverished churches of our Southern States; alike upon the icy coasts of British America and beneath the burning suns of the torrid zone."

ALEXANDER MUNRO.—If any one can supply me with information concerning a minister of the above name, who laboured as a missionary of our body, and who left Scotland for "Upper Canada six or seven years ago," a favour will be conferred.

Montreal, 7th April, 1880. HENRY WILKES.

Correspondence.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Write as briefly as possible—our space is limited—on one side of the paper only.

The Editor is not responsible for the opinions expressed by correspondents.

REV. W. F. CLARKE AND COL. INGERSOLL.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

DEAR SIR,—I see by the Toronto papers that Rev. W. F. Clarke has lectured in the Royal Opera House, on the "Beauties and Blunders of Ingersoll."

We have yet to learn that there are beauties in infidelity. The whole system, from beginning to end, is corrupt, debasing and demoralizing. It is a religion of mud. That Ingersoll has "blundered" no one will for a moment doubt. Those who heard him pronounce him bitter and bad, or, as the "Telegram" styles him, "a shallow-pated blasphemer." But the question arises, has not Mr. Clarke "blundered?" What good will result from a lecture on the above-named subject? Would not Mr. Clarke have served the cause of Christ better by staying at home? What is the use of arguing with a man who uses no arguments; only blasphemous utterances? It is only the "fool" who says "no God." And why discuss such a subject with a "fool?"

It was necessary in the days of Paul to speak to the