

Notes of the Week.

DR. AIRD, of Creich, who had been selected as Moderator of the Free Church General Assembly, an honour which he declined, has spoken bravely in defence of the distressed Lewis cottars. He said it was unjust to characterize them as rebels because they broke one of the iniquitous laws of man, which permitted wild animals to fatten on the land while human beings were allowed to starve. A breach of such a law could not be accounted sin in the eyes of God.

It is said that of the 120 Chinese youths who were sent to American colleges in detachments of thirty, under the charge of the Chinese Commission, all but about a dozen have obtained positions in their own country in different departments of the Government, as civil engineers or as naval officers, or teachers in the naval school. Of the few who returned to the States, the majority are Chinese Consuls, some are attached to the Chinese Legation. One, Hong Yen Chang, a graduate of the Columbia Law School, is striving for admission to the Bar in New York.

YALE University at any rate is having a happy new year. President Timothy Dwight has received a \$20,000 gift for that institution from Alexander Duncan, of London, who graduated in 1825. Mr. Duncan states that he desires the money to be used in providing for the immediate necessities of the university. Mr. S. B. Chittenden, of Brooklyn, has added \$25,000 to his original gift of \$100,000 to Yale University for the building of a library. The building will occupy a position large enough for a structure of about three times its size, and capable of holding 1,500,000 books. The library to be built from Mr. Chittenden's gift will be ample for the present needs of the university, and the plans have been made with a view to enlarging it at some future time.

THE Toronto Vocal Society gave their first concert of the season under the most favourable auspices last week. Under the careful, conscientious and competent training of Mr. W. Elliott Haslam, the society has made marked progress and improvement. The numbers in the programme were selected with admirable judgment and good taste. They were rendered with great beauty, precision and effectiveness. The solos by Miss Agnes Thomson and Miss Robinson were worthy of the hearty appreciation with which they were received. Not the least enjoyable part of the entertainment was the strikingly effective piano solos by Mlle. Aus der Ohe, who, in addition to remarkable musical skill and culture, is evidently possessed of the higher gift of genius. The Vocal Society merits a prosperous future.

ONE of the minor moralities of life, says a contemporary, is the duty of answering letters. Perhaps the "minor" would be better omitted. Yet complaints are rife among Conveners of committees and others whom duty compels to indulge in extensive correspondence (by circular and otherwise), of the difficulty of getting either replies or attention, and of how they are hampered in consequence. Indeed, many a Conventer will tell you that his work would be child's play if he could only get the courtesy of a reply from each of those whom he is obliged to address. Yet post-cards are not dear, and time is not so precious that five minutes out of the twenty-four hours are always an unattainable commodity. That wide-reaching statute, the Golden Rule, is as often broken in the matter of our letters as in most ways we know of. Yet why?

THE petition of the women of England in favour of prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquors on Sundays, says the *British Weekly*, has an immense number of signatures, and must have its effect. Sunday drinking in England is a disgrace to the nation, and we may wonder that women, anxious for the morality

of their homes, have so long endured it. Of course there will be an outcry about shebeening and its dangers, but the scandal of the open public-house door is a thousand times worse. The petition to the Queen was truly described by one of the ladies as "an agonized appeal," and a strong claim made for it that it is the most numerously-signed petition ever presented on the subject of intemperance. But how will the Ministry treat it? Her Majesty has spoken before; we pray that she will speak that way again.

IN view of Dr. Aird's refusal to accept the Moderatorship of the Free Church General Assembly, it is probable, says a contemporary, that the position will be offered to Rev. Alexander Mackenzie of Tolbooth, or Rev. Andrew D. Mackenzie of Kilmorack, both of whom were previously mentioned for the office. The claims of Dr. J. A. Wylie have been urged for the following reasons. As 1888 is a memorial year, being the sixth jubilee of the deliverance from threatened Romish oppression in 1588, the fifth jubilee of the Reformation from Prelacy in 1638, and the fourth of deliverance from persecution in 1688, it will be most appropriate that the venerable historian of Protestantism and of the Scottish nation should then occupy the place of honour. Though in the fifty-seventh year of his ministry, Dr. Wylie is in good health, and, intellectually, is as vigorous as when in younger days he fought the battles of ecclesiastical freedom, as coadjutor with the late Hugh Miller in the editorship of the *Witness*.

THE Edinburgh Free Church Presbytery at its last meeting adopted, by forty votes to fourteen, the overture from the General Assembly on ministerial inefficiency. Mr. W. Balfour moved, and Mr. John McEwan seconded, that the Presbytery do not approve of the overture. Principal Rainy moved its adoption. It was, he said, of great importance that those who wished to maintain the stability as a rule of the ministerial tie should take care that it did not become a pretext for maintaining an abuse, or a wrong state of things, such as would give offence to Christian congregations, and such as might amount to a real scandal in various districts of the Church. He was no true friend of the stability of the ministerial tie who was opposed to the application of a remedy in cases of that kind. That the ministry should represent the care of Christ for His own people, and that it should be carried on in such a way as to gain that end, was the very end for which they existed at all, for which they had any organization of Presbyteries or superior Courts. Mr. Thomas Brown, Dean Church, seconded and the overture was supported by Dr. Walter C. Smith and others.

THE interchange of presents and compliments between her Majesty and Leo XIII., the *Christian Leader* says, is calculated to give grave offence to all sound Protestants. The Queen's gift took the form of a massive basin and ewer of gold designed for service in the celebration of the mass, with which the Pope was greatly pleased. The Duke of Norfolk has conveyed to the Queen an autograph letter from the Pontiff in which he promises, it is said, to use all the influences of the Holy See to bring about a good understanding between the British Government and the people of Ireland. If Mr. Dillon may be accepted as the mouthpiece of the latter, this promise will not count for much. For the reassurance of those who fear that the action of the Queen, and the covert political mission of the Duke of Norfolk, may mean a recognition of the Papal temporal sovereignty, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Salford's denial of such a consequence is worthy of note. In some quarters it is thought that the resumption of diplomatic relations between the British Government and the Vatican can only be a question of time. Before such a consummation—by no means one "devoutly to be wished" is realized, would it not be well to have a new issue of coins with the significant letters "F. D." left out?

THE *Christian Leader*, though a warm admirer of Mr. Spurgeon, is not prepared to defend the extreme position he has assumed in the "Down-Grade" controversy. In a recent issue it says: "While the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle does not sustain the fierceness of his controversy, it is evident that he does not budge from his position. Of 'modern thought' he says: 'The creed of the new religion is not fact nor truth, but mere 'thought.' The new religion practically sets 'thought' above revelation, and constitutes man the supreme judge of what ought to be true.' The confusion of all this would be ridiculous, if it were not the workings of a good man's mind. He cannot define, and he therefore cannot understand that the Puritan Fathers were as much the modern thinkers of their day as equally trustful men are of this Protestantism itself was the result of contemporary thought. We fear, however, that there is small chance of the brethren from whom he has seceded conciliating Mr. Spurgeon. He is not right because he is strong, but his strength will make him staunch. If he will not admit deviation from his own 'thought' of what is fact or truth about the future, then the die is already cast and we judge from his language that he will not assent to this being an 'open question'."

THE Belfast Presbyter, did a right and fitting thing, says the *Witness* of that city, when they appointed a deputation to convey to Dr. Johnston their congratulations on his recovery from his recent illness, and on his having attained the age of seventy. Far beyond Belfast the utmost joy is felt at his restoration to health, and now that it is known that he has reached the Psalmist's threescore years and ten, we are sure congratulations on that auspicious event will be pouring in on him from all quarters. We have not many such valuable lives among us, and everybody knows that we have no greater favourite in the entire Church. Long may he live to enjoy the love of his brethren, and to exercise that influence for good in the affairs of the Church, which has so long been associated with his name. Yet who can really think of Dr. Johnston being seventy years of age? By arithmetical computation he may be, but as a matter of fact, we venture to say he is as young a man as the Church contains. One has only to look into his cheerful, happy countenance, or to watch his light, elastic step as he goes about the streets of Belfast on his multifarious business, to be convinced that he has discovered the secret of perpetual youth which the ancients dreamed of. May he long be a living illustration of its potency!

THE New York *Independent* says that the Rev. Dr. John Hall is finishing the twentieth year of his pastorate of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in that city. His pastorate has been a great success, and yet, as Professor Wilkinson said in a late article in the *Homiletical Monthly*, it would be very difficult to tell in what his power lies, he is so simple, unaffected and so full of rare common sense. But that is just his power. We presume there is no pastor in the city who has been made confident and adviser in more delicate matters of family difficulties. He is a man of colossal proportions, whose stooping head and shoulders do not bring him down to a level with common men, but whose stoop gives him the air of special fatherliness and benediction. He has the smooth-shaved ruddy face of a Roman Catholic bishop and all the dignity of the Pope himself. He is a diligent writer on religious subjects, having for years written notes on the Sabbath School Lessons for the *Sunday School World* and a weekly article for the *Ledger*. His church is the wealthiest in the Presbyterian denomination, and last year \$131,758 was reported as contributed by his church to outside benevolent objects, besides \$32,266 for the support of their own Church. On a recent Sabbath Dr. Hall asked quietly for \$12,000 for their missions, and more was contributed. He came to this country on a contract, and under the present United States law would be refused permission to land.