

Editorial

Whose Half-bushel?

IN THE olden days down in Eastern Canada there flourished a class of men known as ash gatherers or ashmen. It was their trade to go around the countryside from house to house purchasing hardwood ashes, which they carted to certain centres for purposes of manufacture. The most remarkable thing in connection with this trade was the half-bushel measure which the purchaser carried with him. It usually contained at least a bushel and a half. It is no wonder that the farmers' wives rebelled against the unfairness and that some of them insisted on using their own standard half-bushel. They did not object to the price offered for the ashes, but they did object to the standard of measurement. The "ashman's half-bushel" became a by-word and the phrase is still aptly employed in the older provinces.

This is only a figure. In other fields we are adjusting, measuring, estimating worth and value all the time. It is no wonder we disagree, because we use such different measures. It is Oliver Wendell Holmes who says that when Brown and Smith meet it is no wonder they disagree because there are so many of them. There are indeed three Browns and three Smiths. There is the Brown as Smith sees him, the Brown as Brown sees him, and the real Brown. Similarly there are three Smiths.

Now Brown may stand for Presbyterian and Smith for Methodist; or one may stand for Liberal and the other for Conservative; one for Englishman and the other for Frenchman. Isn't it clear that because men have different standards of value in all things that their conclusions are bound to differ.

Just now the papers are giving much attention to education in Canada, and there are wide differences of opinion as to the character of the work being done in the schools and colleges. It will be found that the differences in opinion are largely due to differences in standards. Those who place a premium on book-learning will arrive at one conclusion, those who think in terms of action and conduct may arrive at a very different conclusion. It would seem to be very necessary in this field to get a standard half-bushel measure. We have standards in trade and commerce—standards of weight, measure and value. We have also more or less clearly defined moral standards. Surely it should be possible to determine standards in education, so that useless bickering might be at an end.

A serious, though perhaps an over-ambitious attempt to set a standard for adolescence has been made by those responsible for the Canadian efficiency tests. Some such standard, modified to suit circumstances, might well be adopted for every home and every school. Criticisms and suggestions for improvement are valuable only when related to some conception of education that is universally accepted as worthy. Such conception must consider such elements as physical, intellectual and moral development; knowledge, power and skill; culture and practical ability; habit taste and disposition. It is vain to enter upon comparisons that take into consideration only one of these elements.

It is quite possible that teachers are as likely to err in their judgment as parents, business men and newspaper correspondents. It is quite possible, too, that the standard of measurement should differ with communities.

All that has been said touching school education can be carried over into the field of religious education.

Capital Punishment

FROM a respected correspondent—Robert Bickerdike, of Montreal, we cut the following quotation dealing with capital punishment:

"In these days of agitation for prison reform, may I ask if the time has not arrived when capital punishment, this relic of barbarism, should be abolished in any country claiming to be a Christian nation.

"The death penalty is a cruel invention of caste. A penalty so severe as not to be enforceable has a basic objection; it produces unrest to have a constant miscarriage of justice. A wealthy malefactor, an influential murderer, a powerful assassin cannot go free, in a community where paupers and friendless foreigners are hanged, without the people acquiring a contempt for the laws. I claim that when a man commits murder he is at that particular moment insane, but the State says away with him, hang him, he is not fit to live. May I just be permitted to ask the State—is it quite sure that he is fit to die?

"The State claims divine authority for this leprous outcropping of the dark ages. I claim that the State has no divine authority for the death penalty. Those who clamor most for capital punishment deduce their severity from the Bible and yet it is the Bible which declares that no man should be put to death."

When Silence is Golden

ANOTHER esteemed correspondent—Irene Wilson—writes a letter that is refreshing, because it deals with a matter that is rarely discussed in print. The Monthly gives prominence to the communication in the hope that some writer may expound the opposite view. Naturally the problem would not be approached by a mere man. Here is the article:

"For months I had been reading such articles as

"The most important event of my life," or "of my girlhood days," or "of my married life" until the pages fairly groaned with all the trials and griefs that could beset womanhood. I began to wonder how it happened, that I, with so little ability or attractions to command the things that go to make life happy, should be thus singled out to be the possessor of that priceless jewel.

"It seemed that the most important event in the life of most women was fraught with manifold sorrows and hardships—the cause of each and every event being that scape-goat, a mere man.

"Now, I wonder that in all these unfoldings of the heart's secrets, no man has ventured to give his experience. Do you suppose there has been no event in his life, or is he, contrary to universal opinion, more delicate about exposing to the world the innermost depths of his heart? Does he guard these secrets as sacred vestibles, the doors of which are closed to all but his Maker?

"If such is the case, then man has a nobler sense of fitness than we of the gentler sex. He shrinks from presenting to the public an account of his love affair when his highest ideal proved to be only a myth. He does not publish the fact that the woman he loved trusted and honored with his name, the woman who is the mother of his children, has proved to be a base deceiver; that life behind the curtains is a daily nightmare to him. No, men don't tell such things.

"Man has so long refrained from writing on this subject—while we have continually aired our griefs, that I fear we have come to believe that life holds only happiness for him, that we alone are the ones who suffer. Do you suppose that in all these events where the woman has suffered so keenly, the man who was concerned escaped unscathed? Who knows but what his grief may have been the deeper?

"The life of a man is broader than the life of a woman. He deals with bigger or deeper problems and he deals with bigger minds. His heartaches are forgotten for the time by things of greater moment. We, on the other hand, may be kept just as busy. Our life may be just as full; but our duties are so varied that there are too many thinking moments between. Our problems are not deep enough to require the concentration of our whole thought. This, then, must account for the fact that man, unlike his better half, is able to keep his troubles within his own breast.

"This world is a mixture of joys and sorrows. Some would rather discuss their joys than their sorrows, and vice versa. The more our mind dwells on either side of life, the more fully we can appreciate these beautiful words:

"Think truly and thy thought shall be a true and living seed;
Live truly and thy life shall be a true and living deed."

Brotherhood

Here is something from a farmer lad. Even although the selfishness of man will not permit the realization of the ideal, it is a good thing to have the ideal before us:

"Much has been said about universal peace. To my mind the realization of brotherhood is our only hope. Brotherhood is a fellowship of loving hearts. It implies the consciousness of a common origin, common rights, common responsibilities, common duties and a common destiny. There must be a spirit of brotherhood in our industrial world. Let the farmer say 'Thank God I live in a time when one man can feed a thousand.' Let the manufacturer say, 'I am a worker with God, for I am also a creator.' Let the railroad man say, 'If it were not for me the East would be famine-stricken. I will make haste in transporting food that I may feed the hungry.' Let the middleman say, 'What can I do to best serve my companions?' Let the employer say, 'What are the largest wages I can pay my working men and live?' Let the working man say, 'What is the best service I can render and still maintain life at its full flood tide?' Let the lawyer say, 'I am a minister of justice, and God is just.' Let the doctor say, 'I am following the footsteps of Christ who healed the sick.' Let the minister say, 'I do not ask for a rich parish; put me where I can bring life and comfort to suffering humanity.'

The Beginning of the End

WHEN this issue reaches our people the great drive will in all probability have begun. The real war will be taking place, for all that has occurred up to date must be looked upon as preliminary. It is for those of us who are at home to support the men who are risking all for principle. We can support them by our attitude and our actions, and we must fail in neither. Our attitude should be that of men and women who are reverently attempting to thwart the power of the greatest enemy of true civilization. For we hold it to be true that enduring greatness and goodness is based in love rather than force or might. And so, with love for God and right in our hearts, we shall persevere in our earnestness. And as our sons and fathers are risking their lives, so we shall gladly place our means and our time at our Country's disposal. The end is not far distant, but there is much suffering ere the end. The spirit of the men in the field and the spirit of suffering parents are well set forth in Newbolt's little poems, which are used to lighten up this page.

The Torch of Life

By Henry Newbolt

There's a breathless hush in the close to-night—
Ten to make and the match to win—
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play and the last man in,
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote—
"Play up! Play up! and play the game!"

The sand of the desert is sodden red,—
Red with the wreck of a square that broke,
The gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke,
The river of death has brimmed his banks
And England's far, and Honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:
"Play up! play up! and play the game!"

This is the word that year by year
While in her place the school is set,
Every one of her sons must hear,
And none that hears it dare forget,
This they all with with a joyful mind
Bear through life like a torch in flame,
And falling, fling to the host behind—
"Play up! play up! and play the game."

The Only Son

By Henry Newbolt

A bitter wind toward the sunset blowing
What of the dales to-night?
In yonder old hall what fires are glowing
What ring of festal light?

"In the great window as the day was dwindling,
I saw an old man stand;
His head was proudly held and his eyes kindling,
But the list shook in his hand."

O wind of twilight, was there no word uttered—
No sound of joy or wail?
"A great fight and a good death," he muttered,
"Trust him, he would not fail."

What of the chamber dark where she was lying—
For whom all life is done?
Within her heart she rocks a dead child, crying—
"My son, my little son."

Weather, War and Earthquake

Often since this war began we have read in the news despatches of how unfavorable weather has hampered military operations. There have been some famous instances of the same thing in history. At Crecy, for instance, as Froissart records, "the great rain" rendered useless the bowstrings of the Genoese archers, but the English bows, being kept in cases, were unaffected. Severe weather contributed materially to the disastrous failure of Napoleon's expedition against Russia. And at Solferino the Austrians, in their retreat, were saved from annihilation by a cyclone which threw the French into confusion. But the most remarkable case of the interference of natural forces, with operations of warfare which The Philosopher can remember having come across in his reading was at Jellalabad in 1842, when a small British force, under the command of Sir Robert Sale, in daily expectation of being attacked by an overwhelming force of Afghans, labored night and day to improve the fortifications of the town. Akbar Khan had approached within a few miles, and an onslaught of his army was imminent, when on the morning of February 19 an earthquake nearly destroyed the city and wrought havoc in the fortifications. If Akbar Khan had ordered an assault that morning, what good follower of the Prophet could doubt that Allah had given his aid. The Afghans held off, however; and later, when they besieged the place, which, thanks to the industry of the British force, showed no outward signs of damage by the earthquake, they believed that Jellalabad had not felt the earthquake at all, thanks to "English magic".

Bedlamite Logic

Long-winded, vociferous statements now come from Berlin in attempted justification of everything Germany has done to Belgium. But as long as human memory endures the record will stand of the words of the Imperial Chancellor, von Bethmann-Hollweg, in the Reichstag on August 4, 1914, when he admitted that the German invasion of Belgium was "a breach of international law," and added: "The wrong we thereby commit we will try to make good as soon as our military aims have been attained." Yet every obedient son of Kultur must now swallow the present "justifications" of the violation and ravaging of Belgium. After swallowing these "justifications," it ought to be an easy matter for the docile Huns to swallow this wonderful and inimitable piece of logic from a leading German religious journal, the Evangelische-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung: "London is no longer by any means an unfortified city. It is armed with such quantities of anti-aircraft guns and aeroplanes that the Zeppelins, as is well known, only venture to attack the city by night." Was such logic ever heard before outside of Bedlam?