

Truth's Contributors.

MINISTERIAL EXEMPTIONS.

BY CLERICUS.

If the tone of public sentiment throughout the country is to any considerable degree indicated by that of Toronto, the law exempting ministers of the gospel from taxation is among the things that "must go." It is a growing conviction in the public mind that they, in common with other citizens who have the benefit of protection to persons and property afforded by the police and the fire brigade, and who use the streets and other city improvements and conveniences shall pay their legitimate proportion of the cost of their maintenance. Doubtless much more is made in the argument against exemptions, of the extra burden they impose upon the poor workingman, than the facts justify, as anyone who will take the trouble to examine the question for the whole country may prove, but whether the per capita sum, when distributed over the whole community is large or small, the principle remains the same: Do ministers of the gospel sustain such a relation to society as in equity entitles them to exemption from municipal taxation that would not with equal force apply to a claim for exemption from contributing to the public revenue derived from customs and excise? If the reason for any exemption lies in the moral influence they exercise in promoting industry, sobriety and public morality, then it applies to exemption in general, otherwise the law determines that the value of their services in the respects intimated corresponds with the amount of local assessment from which they are excused. It may be answered that legislators have not undertaken to specifically determine the public value of the services clergymen render in the respect of economies to the community in which they live, but to express withincertain and practicable limits their acknowledgment of such service, to which it may justly be replied, why not then extend the same acknowledgment to public and Sabbath school teachers, to lay evangelists and many others whose labors bear the same fruits, and especially to such of them as derive no income from the worth they do.

The fact is, this whole question of clerical exemption from taxation is a feature of state-churchism which ought to be expunged from the statute of our country, and with all the other privileges of citizenship which they enjoy let the law give to clergymen that of paying taxes as other men do. In this country the state exercises no control in ecclesiastical assemblies nor in the determination of the form of denominational organization nor in limitation of their enterprises. It extends no favor to one to the exclusion of others, but to all allows an open field with guarantees for their protection from disturbance and in the prosecution of their work. More than this the state ought not to do, and to continue a sort of quasi pecuniary subsidy in the form of clerical exemption from taxation is to perpetuate a principle of state and church union which in all other respects few in Canada at all events will agree should be maintained. That any considerable number of the clergy will oppose the repeal of the exemption clauses of the assessment law in so far as their personal income is thereby affected, no one who appreciates the large-hearted liberality characteristic of their profession supposes, hence much that has appeared in the daily papers upon the subject has been as unjust as it has been ungenerous. The minis-

ters of to-day have not asked for any such favor from the legislature, neither have they by pen or voice attempted any opposition to the repeal of the statute in the case. They have kept themselves entirely aloof from the discussion, except in self-defense when false issues have been raised, and it is more than probable they will maintain the same attitude in any future discussion of the question. The fact of their having availed themselves of the present statutory provision in their behalf is no proof to the contrary, neither is it any evidence of their desire to evade their share of the burdens of citizenship. They have simply accepted, as civil service officers, judges and certain others have done, the provisions of the assessment law as it is and in doing so have no more exposed themselves to the charge of profiting by the involuntary contributions of the public than have the other classes named.

TORONTO, ONT.

THE MOTHER OF ANGELS.

BY BESSIE STAR KEEFER.

It is Sabbath evening. A solemn stillness pervades the air. The church bells have long since ceased ringing. My children are asleep in their cosy nest, upstairs. And I, with my feet on the fender, sit dreamily looking into the fire. There is no one else in the house and I can rest in my easy chair undisturbed. What thoughts come crowding in upon my mind, visions of the past, regrets, self-reproach. The wind is rising and a mournful wail sweeps past the window. What waves of unconquerable longing, what billows of anguish come rolling over me. I rise and walk rapidly up and down the room, struggling against the overwhelming agony, how long I know not, but at last the storm is over, for the same dear voice which commanded the waves of Galilee has said, "Peace; be still!" and Sabbath calm again possesses me, driving out this spirit of unrest that will at times seize upon me.

I said my children were asleep upstairs. Two are there, but three are under the snow. O friend, do you know what that means? Do you know what it means, when the wind is whistling down the chimney, to realize that out in the desolate grave-yard, down in the frozen ground, lies the babe, that scarcely entered your home ere it left it, whose first feeble wail was a farewell—the little daughter, just learning to lip your name, when an unseen finger closed her lips forever? A darling boy; your pride; a treasure guarded so jealously, and without whom it seemed 'twould be impossible to live; whose feet ran on such willing errands; whom you folded to your bosom with all the intensity of a mother's yearning affection while the blue eyes lovingly looking into yours gave emphasis to the caressing "mama darling;" suddenly, without warning, snatched from your arms, the loving eyes closed, the dear voice hushed, the willing feet nevermore to run to meet you? If you understand the bitter, bitter meaning, God help you, for He alone can make light to shine in this darkness. And He will help you.

Though so many centuries have elapsed, the promise is as sure to-day as when it first was given—"My grace is sufficient for thee." It is useless for friends to counsel us to "be resigned," it is worse than useless for us so to counsel ourselves. Zealous Christians speak no reproach, come not to us with saintly homilies on the blessed meaning and mission of affliction, or duty of submission. We have heard all that before. But

sometimes we cannot bear even a sympathetic hand-clasp. Only leave us alone with our grief and our God, let us wait upon Him, and the time will come when in the midst of our mourning we shall say: "He leadeth me beside the still waters." O what stillness after our turbulent grief! Slanderer, do you know we are mothers of angels! The preciousness of that thought is taking possession of me to night as I resume my chair by the fire.

"They are not dead—
But gone into that school
Where they no longer need our poor protection,
And Christ himself doth rule."

The cold grave and desolate churchyard pass; I see the gates of pearl, the streets of gold, the crystal sea, and the "great multitude which no man can number," forever free from pain, or crying, or sickness; happy where there is "fulness of joy forevermore." The wind dies away and in its stead I hear the sound of "harpers harping on their harps," and the triumphal song of the redeemed. And above it all there comes to me the well remembered greeting—"here's my mama's darling boy," and as I strain my eyes to see my children on the other shore, the vision fades; but my sorrow will never again be quite the same. Heaven is a reality.

Perhaps you have asked why does God give us our children only to take them again and leave us desolate. But, bereaved mother, would you give the remembrance of the happiness that was yours for a season, the thousand treasured words and ways, to escape this pain? I know you would not. Rather let us, from the remembrance, gather inspiration to truer womanhood and nobler lives, as deep down in our hearts we say:

"The mother of angels must walk softly."

TORONTO, ONT.

THE DECLINE OF THE POETIC AGE.

BY W. E. EMERSON.

And the angels, all pallid and wan,
Uprising, unrivelling, affirm
That the play is the tragedy of man,
And its hero the conqueror worn.

In this truly wonderful and progressive age, that has accomplished so much and solved so many mysteries, the seemingly simple question, "What is poetry?" remains unexplained. That which we consider unexplained is a something, countless leagues beyond stereotyped definitions. We have all heard of poetry in real life; of poetry in nature. We see it in sunshine, feel it at dusky evening, and hear it in the moaning storm. It blossoms in the tender flowers, it sighs o'er desert wastes, and, though we feel its magic, we fail utterly to identify its real essence. We listen to the innocent prattle of children, the laughing voice of the brook, the sweet thrill of nightingales, the quiet murmur of leafy groves, and the deep diapason of the storm-tossed ocean; and we know that man has seized and blended them into harmonious and eloquent melodies, but the soul of song is and remains unhomed, for 'tis fathomless indeed in this boasted age of practicality that we do not even attempt to understand that which we feel belongs to the age of poetry. Reader, write the name of all the poets of whom you can think, strike your pencil through the names of those upon and against whom seemed to rest the dark frown of Providence. Examining the list and see how few names remain unconquered. What does this prove? That genius finds a potent enemy in the age of practicality. What does this prove? That genius finds its very origin in the truthfully said that "happily and women have been the most brilliant of some startling."

their best energies, at which was looked upon at the time as a calamity." Thus poetry must be composed of soul—must spring from the heart—or it falls short of moving us; from heart strings often that have been attuned to misery, struck by passion, vibrated by ambition, or it finds no answering tremor in our own. There is a long train of misfortunes and unhappy eccentricities of characters met with in reading the lives of poets. Public opinion is to day, and has ever been, quick to censure and slow to appreciate. What an example in these immortal lines:

"Seven cities proudly claimed the Homer dead
Through which the living Homer begged his bread."

"Distance lends enchantment." So we, to-day, look far away to the towering forms of poetry. We call this Homer, that Virgil, others Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and so on down the dazzling coterie, sparkling, and radiant in the sunlight of universal applause. Familiar names are these in the geography of literature, but we do not remember, as we should, that these giant representatives of genius were brought forth from obscurity, uplifted by turbulence, made enduring by disaster, and that a robe of poverty and a crown of thorns gave way for the halo of glory. The earliest part of this century witnessed the noon tide of the poetic age. The heavens were ablaze with meteors which shot upward toward the zenith of poetry, suddenly to fall beyond the horizon of their times, there revolve in the darkness and gloom for a time till another age should fix them in a constellation, both fadeless inuster and deathless in sublimity. After death, genius is appreciated and receives its reward. Once there was a plow-boy who sang as he walked the furrows of his father's field. The mountain flower and the talking brook found in him the poet; he led a life of misery, struggled in poverty, and at last died of a broken heart—when, lo! he was suddenly exalted to a place in lyric poetry, beyond which no one can ever pass. This was Scotland's bard, Burns, by far the greatest and grandest poet that oversprang from the bosom of the people. Again, on a bright summer morning the blue waters of the Mediterranean chanted a quiet requiem as they bore to their shores the stark and motionless body of an outcast, and the sunny Italian skies looked sadly down from above while the sea beneath sang hoarsely to rest her laureate. At the feet of Mont Blanc, upon a rocky tablet of her side, you may yet find his name carved by his own hand, "P. B. Shelley, atheist;" no God, no hope, no future, and yet he was a child of nature; a lover of the simplest flower, a worshipper of the tiniest bird, and touched to tears by the symphony of music. There is another deformed, discolored, misanthropic one—Byron. Here there comes a voice:

"Have I not suffered enough to be forgiven?
Have I not had my heart's blood shed, my heart's
Hopes sapped, my life's blood dried?"

Better die you than the sad heart
pains. Why should I live, and
scarcity of Halle, danger
Drake, the suicide,
we remember, and
night, at 11 P.M.
demon find the
the long, over-
heard, and
new, and
star, and
Edgar, and
down.