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NOTE AND COMMENT

More than one-quarter of the population of the United States is Roman Catholic, if the estimate of the official Catholic directory is to be credited. Its figures are 22,857,079.

The Seventh Day Adventists have a following in certain parts of the Canadian West and evidently are planning for more. A conference for the four provinces has been called, to meet at Lacombe, Alta., where the body has the nucleus of a training school and college.

The Montreal Witness cites an interesting case where a rather novel means is being used to promote total abstinence in a local organization. It says:—"The Young Men's Society of St. Finnan's Cathedral, Alexandria, have a very good skating rink adjoining Alexander Hall. The membership fee for young men is \$3 for the season; but those young men who take the pledge to abstain from intoxicating liquor receive the season ticket for \$1."

It is reported that both Italy and Switzerland are fortifying the entrances of the great Simplon tunnel, while in the tunnel itself engineers are engaged in constructing mines and strengthening those already in place, in order to blow up the tunnel at a moment's notice in the event of war.

Japan is taking another step in line with the policy that seeks to conform with the customs of the Western nations. A bill has been presented in the Diet, by Foreign Minister Komura, which he says it is the desire of the government to see passed, by which foreigners shall be permitted to own land without restriction—except that it extends the privilege to citizens or subjects of such countries only as permit the same privileges to Japanese. The change in the law, so Minister Komura states, is made necessary by treaties about to be made.

The loss of population in France is not due to emigration. On the contrary migration increases the population of the country. There is in France at present one foreigner to every thirty-eight native French. The average mortality rates are lower than those of Germany, Austria or Italy; yet the three last named countries grow in population while France decreases owing to her low birth-rate. To give a few examples, the births during the last six months in the Cote d'Or Department were 2,843, and the Cote d'Or 3,959. In the Yonne Department 2,859 were respectively 2,382 and 3,627. These numbers tell their own tale of depopulation.

Marvelous progress in the Christian conquest of Africa is being made but great as the progress is, it is only a tithe of the work that must be done before the continent is finally evangelized. The Christian Express brings together some facts in regard to Africa which are quite impressive. According to this article, 104 Protestant missionary organizations are at work in the continent and are using the Word of God, which has been translated in whole or in part into 117 languages or dialects. In the line of education there are 8 colleges, 59 theological training schools, 83 boarding and high schools, 63 industrial institutions, 2 medical schools for training nurses, several kindergarten and some thousands of primary and village schools. In the line of medical missions there are 43 hospitals and 107 dispensaries, where on an average 150,000 patients are treated each year. There are 3 leper hospitals, 28 homes for rescued slaves and 13 orphanages; there are 33 mission presses and 31 mission magazines.

"In choosing his men," said the Sabbath school superintendent, "Gideon did not select those who laid aside their arms and threw themselves down to drink; he took those who watched with one eye and drank with the other."

"The first necessity of a Christian church," says H. Arnold Thomas, "is not that it should have a building to worship in, or a minister to preach to it, or an organ to lead its singing. These things may all be dispensed with. The one thing needful is that it should have such a vision of the glory of God as will make peace and joy impossible unless it is doing its best to declare to others the things which it has seen and heard."

The congregation of St. George's United Free Church, Edinburgh, have approved of a recommendation of the Kirk Session and Deacons' Court that an additional colleague should be appointed to Dr. Whyte and Dr. Kelman. Dr. Whyte's health has not been so good of late, and he has reduced his activities in obedience to medical advice. He preaches three times a month and is allowed to finish his Bible-class course for this year since the lectures were already prepared. Some time ago a report from the session was submitted to the Deacons' Court, who approved of the following financial arrangements:—Dr. Whyte to receive £380; Dr. Kelman £800, with manse and taxes paid; and the junior colleague £650.

France is to adopt an old-age pension system, a bill having already passed both chambers. It will affect about 17,000,000 persons. It follows the German rather than the English plan. The employer and employee both contribute in yearly payments, and the state gives one-half the total. Pensions begin at the age of 65. The highest possible pension is \$250 a year; but this, with the economical methods of living in France, the lower wages, and cost of service, will enable one to live. The three great nations of Europe have thus adopted the plan of old-age pensions. Although the cost is large, the working of the system is comparatively easy, because each is a small, compact territory, with very little foreign immigration. Each has the task only of providing for its own people.

Says the "Interior" — "When the Japanese commercial commissioners were in New York last autumn one of the dinners tendered them was given in the name of the Christian business men of the city. The principal response on behalf of the guests was made by the chairman of the commission, Baron Shibusawa, who speaks no English and therefore required the service of an interpreter. Whether by intent or misunderstanding, this interpreter quite failed to transfer to the Americans present the sense of what was probably the baron's most significant and emphatic utterance. But a missionary at the table caught the sentence, took it down, translated it and verified his translation by submitting the same to a member of the Japanese party familiar with English. The baron's declaration, as thus rendered and verified, was as follows: 'Japan in the future must base her morality on religion. It must be a religion that does not rest on an empty or superstitious faith like that of some of the Buddhist sects in our land, but must be like the one that prevails in your own country, which manifests its power over men by filling them with good works.' Coming from the lips of Japan's pre-eminent business leader, not himself a Christian, the meaning of this utterance can hardly be overrated."

Official figures now available show that the amount of whiskey consumed within the United Kingdom last year amounted to 25,459,566 proof gallons, a decrease of 5,953,831 gallons on the previous year, and of 7,214,825 gallons as compared with 1907. There seems to be some difference of opinion as to whether the decreased consumption is the result of improved habits and better purposes on the part of the people, or of the higher duty on spirits imposed by the Government. Whatever may be the cause, the result is a matter for congratulation. There has been a falling off in liquor consumption; there has been a falling off in drunkenness; and notwithstanding the increased duty, there has been a falling off in the liquor revenue.

Says the Presbyterian Standard: The relative numerical strength of Christianity in the world, according to the figures of M. Emmanuel de Flaix, is 475,080,158. Mohammedanism has 175,000,000; Taoism, 43,000,000; Buddhism, 147,000,000; Hinduism, 190,000,000; Shintoism, 24,000,000 and Polytheistic systems, 117,000,000. The population of the globe is set down as 1,420,000,000. In ratio Christian adherents outnumber those of any other nearly two to one. A century ago there were only one hundred and fifty missionaries in the world. In 1895 the number had increased to 11,000, with forty thousand native co-laborers. Within less than a hundred years about three hundred of the islands of the seas have been wholly evangelized. In some of the islands not a heathen remains. In Japan, it is interesting to know that of the nearly four hundred members of its population, four per cent are Christians, and about forty-five per cent of its population is actually under positive Christian influence. The effect of the growth of Christianity in this empire upon Korea and China will be far-reaching.

The Dalai Lama, whose triumphant journey to Peking was duly chronicled some time ago, and who proved such a very unwelcome guest to the Peking government, seems to have entered on the last chapter of his career. After his return to Lhasa he roused the suspicion of the Chinese government, with the result that a force of 2,000 men was sent against him. A decree deposing him and depriving him of all rank and orders, and accusing him of disobedience, intrigue and refusal to pay tribute, was made public in his "holy" city. The Dalai Lama himself fled at the approach of the troops, and narrowly escaped capture. His objective point is India, and Lord Morley, Secretary of State for India, has announced that he will be invited to occupy the Warren Hastings house in Calcutta, and that he will be "treated with the courtesy and respect due to a ruler of high spiritual authority." The deposition and flight are of deep religious significance. China not only reasserts its sovereignty of Tibet, but has shattered the spiritual authority and influence of the spiritual ruler of 200,000,000 human beings. To the Buddha of Northeastern Asia the Dalai Lama is the representative of Buddha on earth, and the incarnation of the divine, infallible, inspired ruler of the spiritual forces known to man. Lhasa has been the Mecca of the Buddhists for thousands of miles, and the Lama the holy being whom blessing they sought. The Buddhism of Siam and Ceylon is of a different cult, but Siberia, China, Japan and the islands of southeastern Asia look Lhasaward, and the effect of this desecration of the Lama cannot but hasten the already-begun disintegration of the faith even though it changes no rite of the worship, and though a successor be shortly chosen. For this reason the event is of significance and importance to us of the Christian world.