

Correspondence.

CHURCH DEBT.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

SIR,—All honour to your correspondent "Layman" for his timely remarks on Church Debts, many of us share his opinions but have lacked the courage to speak out.

The question is, should there be any church debts? It is useless to plead that they are unavoidable. It would be quite easy for every church to pay its way if a little prudence were exercised. Suppose a number of us desire to meet together in the Lord's name, we adopt a "pay as we go" system. How will it work? Let us meet from house to house until we are rich enough to pay the hire of a hall. Then let us "lay by as the Lord has prospered us," until enough is raised to pay for the first step—purchase of land. Continuing the system; let us lay by again until we are in a position to put up a house to worship in, free of debt. But should we ever get any churches by that method of working? If not, where is the harm? The Lord requires honesty of His people even before church edifices. But I venture to say that if the "pay as we go" system had been carried out by all the denominations, we would have just as many churches as we have now, but with this important difference, they would all be paid for, and we would be in a position to dedicate to the Lord what is our own, and a moment's thought will show the reasonableness of the assertion. Is it not true that we labour with zeal to raise money for something not to be obtained until it is paid for, while our efforts will be comparatively weak to pay up for what is already in our possession. There would be policy as well as honesty in the "pay as we go" method.

Nobody doubts the evil influence of the church debt. It hangs like a mill-stone round the necks of pastor and people, and is in the way of every attempt to advance. The church is an everlasting committee of ways and means, spending its time and energies in devising schemes for lightening the burden, and the pressure of circumstances brings the church into competition with the theatre and music hall, to provide entertainments that will "draw." And is not much of the money raised by church "efforts" really squeezed out of unwilling givers? Take for instance, the usual deputation of rather attractive young ladies who are appointed to sell tickets, because, "of course, no gentleman can say no to a lady." Or the pressure to buy or subscribe put upon the tradesmen who know that for business reasons he had better not refuse offerings to the Lord! Rather in many cases money coaxed, and wrung, and wheedled from those who care nothing for the purpose to which the gift is applied. Is this put too strongly? Unfortunately many of us know and sorrow over the truth of it. If "pay as we go" had been the rule, these things would not be, neither would we have seen the development in these days of the "lifter of church debts." Generally a brother with a deal of well, let us say confidence, and warranted to raise fifty per cent. more from a congregation than any body else can. To be brief; are not the scenes at some of these debt litings such as to make the thoughtful Christian blush with shame?

One word more. In the specimen No. of the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT there was mention of a church in low condition as to numbers, but with this honourable record, "no debt, and no dissension." Is there not a remarkable connection between the two things? Are not some of the worst of church squabbles over schemes for raising money? At least, such is the experience of, Yours, EARNEST.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

DEAR SIR,—Occasionally the INDEPENDENT has a column of matter, slighted perhaps by gentlemen's eyes, but sharply scanned by the fairer sex. I refer to the column devoted to recipes. One of your lady readers, having discovered a glass of wine in one of these recipes, has asked me to call your attention to it. She thinks that such a recipe does not exactly square with your strong temperance principles enun-

ciated in the paper. To have "no quarter to the decanter" ringing out in one column, and a glass of wine sparkling in another, is as bad in her opinion as to have an angel from the sky hobnobbing with a fiend from the pit. Is she not right? If total abstinence means anything it means total abstinence, and has no more respect for a glass of wine in a pudding, than for that fateful "first glass" we talk about so much. I close these remarks with a quotation from her letter:—"I was very much troubled at reading in last week's (Feb. 19th) INDEPENDENT a receipt for some dish with a glass of wine in it! Now, I hope you won't say that I am making a mountain out of a mole-hill. I am sure in dealing with such a terrible foe we cannot be too watchful in guarding every avenue by which he may gain a foothold, for we know, alas! too well, how hard it is to dislodge him once he is in." Yours truly,

HUGH PEDLEY.

Cobourg, March 10th, 1879.

[We promise that no more of our recipes shall be "thinned with a glass of wine." The lady is right. The enemy should not be allowed to enter our homes even in a "Queen's Toast."—ED. C. I.]

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES gives young men sensible advice on the marriage question, as follows:—"The true girl has to be sought for. She does not parade herself as show goods. She is not fashionable. Generally, she is not rich. But, oh! What a heart she has when you find her! So large and pure and womanly. When you see it you wonder if those showy things outside were women. If you gain her love your two thousand are millions. She'll not ask you for a carriage or a first-class house. She'll wear simple dresses, and turn them when necessary, with no vulgar magnificat to frown upon her economy. She'll keep everything neat and nice in your sky parlour, and give you such a welcome when you come home that you'll think your parlour higher than ever. She'll entertain true friends on a dollar, and astonish you with the new thought how little happiness depends on money. She'll make you love home (if you don't you're a brute), and teach you how to pity, while you scorn a poor, fashionable society that thinks itself rich, and vainly tries to think itself happy. Now, do not, I pray you, say any more: 'I can't afford to marry.' Go, find the true woman, and you can. Throw away that cigar, burn up that switch cane, be sensible yourself, and seek your wife in a sensible way."

MR. CROOKS' new school bill does not propose any radical change in the school law. Perhaps the most important provision is to be found in the following clause: "In any case where a High School Board of Public School Corporation may, by law, require the Municipal Council to raise or borrow a sum of money for the purchase of school site, or the erection or purchase of any school house or addition thereto, or other school accommodation, or for the purchase or erection of a teacher's residence, such Municipal Council may refuse to raise or borrow such sum when it is so resolved by a two-thirds vote of the members present at the meeting of the council for considering any by-law in that behalf." It is but fair to give the municipal councils a voice in the incurring of liabilities for which they are responsible. By another clause the time for which debentures may be issued for school purposes is extended to twenty years. The amendments in matters of detail are principally in the direction of assimilating the law for the election of school trustees to the ordinary election law; and there seems to be a general feeling that the bill does not go far enough in this direction, seeing that it falls short of vote by ballot. We do not doubt that election by ballot would sometimes be found quite as beneficial in the case of school trustees as it is in the case of members of Parliament, and for the same or very similar reasons.

SIR ROWLAND HILL is to be presented with the freedom of the city of London in acknowledgments of the great benefits derived from uniform penny postage, introduced by him in 1840.

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XII.

Mat. 23. } THE ALL-SEEKING GOD. { Ps. cxxxix. 1-12.
1879. }

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thou God seest me."—Gen. xvi. 13.

HOME STUDIES.

M. Job xi. 7-20. . . . God unsearchable.
T. Psalm xcvi. 1-13. . . "The Lord is great."
W. Isa. xlv. 6-20. . . "The first and the last."
Th. Psalm cxvii. 1-12. . . "The Lord reigneth."
F. Psalm cxlv. 1-21. . . "Great is the Lord."
S. Psalm cxlii. 1-9. . . His glory above the heavens.
S. Psalm cxxxix. 1-12. The all-seeing God.

HELPS TO STUDY.

Nothing is known of the authorship of this sublime Psalm. Many regard it as David's, while others assign it to a later date. The omniscience and omnipotence of God are here set forth for our comfort, in the first twelve verses and then they are illustrated thereafter.

I. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF US.—Verses 1-6. It is thorough. Thou, is emphatic. God alone knows us. We may hide our real selves from others; we may even be ignorant of ourselves. There is no man who fully understands himself. But God has searched us out. (1 Chron. xxviii. 9; Jer. xvii. 10; 1 Cor. ii. 10). The word represents a very thorough process of exploring and sifting, as one digs for treasure, as the woman sought the lost coin (Luke xv. 8-10). Therefore, He knows us, our sins, ignorances, frailties, sorrows, and necessities. He knows the worst about us and yet He loves us. He takes note even of the least things, and our most trifling affairs. His care extends to everything that affects our welfare, our down-sitting and uprising, when we cease work and when we begin it, our rest and our activity, are known to Him. Even our thought, He understandeth afar off, while it is yet unspoken, even while yet we are scarcely conscious of it; our motives, feelings, and designs are all known to Him—Matt. ix. 4; John ii. 24; 1 Cor. iv. 5. He sees us in all places, our path and lying down, where we go and where we stay, God compasseth, literally, winnoweth, sifteth—Prov. v. 21; xv. 3; Job xxxi. 4. Ver. 4 repeats the idea of ver. 2; even before the word is on the tongue God knows it. Thou hast beset me, surrounded me with Thy wonderful care and watchfulness—Acts xvii. 28. And laid Thine hand upon me, to bless, to uphold, and encourage—Neh. ii. 8; Rev. i. 17. Such knowledge, so extensive and so minute, comprehending the greatest, condescending to the least, fills the singer with admiration and amazement. It is too wonderful for him. He cannot take it in, or attain unto it. We can never attain to such knowledge, even of ourselves, as God has of us.

Thus, by a succession of most vivid illustrations, does David set forth the wonders of God's omniscience. And it is all done to encourage himself. "How precious are Thy thoughts unto me!" He likes to think of God seeing him always, for then he will always be taken care of. And he wishes to be seen through and through, that whatever is evil in him may be detected, dragged forth, and cast out; so he prays, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked in me."

A girl went into her master's room, a room not much frequented, to steal. Now, there was a portrait in the room, and the eyes of the portrait seemed to follow her wherever she went, and she felt annoyed by it; and in order that she might steal without this rebuke, she took down the portrait, and cut the eyes out. Poor, silly, wicked thing! If she could have plucked out God's eye, she might have sinned without remorse.

II. THE PRESENCE OF GOD—Vers. 7-12.

Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? is an exclamation of awe and reverence. Whither shall I flee? Thus the Psalmist expresses the impossibility of finding a place where God is not. It is only the disobedient and the sinful who desire to get away from that blessed and holy presence. Jonah in vain tried to fly from God. The only refuge is to fly to Him. It is sin that makes the presence of God irksome and terrible. Let sin be put away by the all-cleansing blood, and God's presence becomes a delight. The unforgiven sinner would not be happy in heaven; God is there. A rough, ignorant man could not be happy in the midst of a refined and educated company. So the sin-stained would be wretched in the high and holy place where the Holy One dwells. While we cannot escape from God's presence, we can escape from His wrath; the cross of Jesus is our refuge—2 Cor. v. 19, 21; Eph. ii. 16, 17; v. 2; Col. i. 20; Heb. vi. 18. If I make my bed in Hades, the world of the dead, Thou art there—Job xxvi. 6; Prov. xv. 11. He that in the madness and desperation of his guilt rushes upon death, cannot escape conscience nor hide from the God of Truth. It is a blessed and comfortable truth to all who love God that not even death can separate them from His love.

The swift light that travels, as it were, on wings, cannot outrun God's glories—Ps. xviii. 3; civ. 3. Distance cannot remove nor darkness cover—Job xxiv. 22; Isa. xxix. 15. Everywhere and at all times God's hand guides and His arm is underneath those who trust Him—Deut. xxxiii. 27; Ps. lxxiii. 8; lxxiii. 23; Isa. xli. 13.

God's hand fashioned us. Again, look at those beauti-