

ber as the Secretary of the International Congregational Council of 1891. The fourth annual meeting of the Congress has just been held in Nottingham, England. About nine hundred delegates and guests were in attendance, and the number would have been far larger had there been a building in the city suitable for larger gatherings. The object of this Congress is to unite the various Nonconformist bodies in the work which all have in common, and especially for more efficient co-operation in the cause of Disestablishment. There is a National Congress, and the whole country is organized into smaller "Nonconformist Councils" representing counties and cities. The body is steadily growing. The president of the recent Congress was the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, the leader of the great Wesleyan Mission in London. The preacher was the Rev. J. H. Jowett, successor to Dr. Dale in the Carr's Lane Chapel at Birmingham. The sermon, the address of the President, and the various other addresses all seem to have warranted the statement that a new era in the history of Nonconformity is opening. The English Dissenters are closing their ranks, and showing to the world the power of a united and compact Christian body. There is unity among them without uniformity. They are beginning to realize some of the blessings of a united church. The paper on "What Federation is Doing," showed that "The Councils" now have associated with them at least 7,500 churches, and a membership of more than a million. By the adoption of a parochial system in which various churches unite, many beneficial results have been achieved. In some cities united "missions" have been held, as, for instance, in Birmingham, in which over one hundred and sixty churches and missions co-operated. The city was divided into eighteen districts, and from ten to fifteen thousand people were gathered every night in the meetings, while about fourteen hundred confessed conversion. Another result of the co-operation is the prevention of wasteful competition such as is seen in the starting of churches where they are not needed, and the maintenance of services where only rivalry is possible. Another result has been united effort against public evils, as gambling, music-halls, and saloons. Still another result has been federated civic work, in which the whole force of the Free Church sentiment has been brought to bear in favor of liberty of religious opinion, especially in its relation to the School Boards. These are samples of what has already been accomplished, and show that we do not need to wait for harmony of opinion on doctrinal or ecclesiastical principles before practical Christian union begins. Every student of the religious life of our time ought to examine with care the history of the rise and growth of the Free Church Congress.

### Do People Sleep Enough?

No; and by this bold denial, we mean to stand, when we take into consideration the whole people of the whole broad land.

Some years ago the man who calls himself "The Bystander" in the *London Graphic*, wrote some papers on the drawbacks and advantages of going to bed early and getting up early; and he ended his preachment thus:

"My brethren, let there be no mistake about the matter. Early to bed and early to rise neither makes a man healthy or wealthy or wise."

He wrote these words in his youth, and while time has perhaps modified some of his views, he thinks, on sober reflection, that his opinions were in the main right, and that he was really in advance of his time, for the most conservative of medical periodicals occasionally echo his opinion, that the plumage of the early bird is not so beautiful nor its conduct so worthy of imitation as we have been accustomed to think; and he again calls attention, in a late number, to the opinion of the American physician—Dr. Talcott—who traces the prevalence of insanity among farmers and their families to perpetual early rising. The English people seem to be in advance of us here, for in London the business houses are each year getting later and later.

"Tis the voice of the sluggard, I heard him complain,  
-Don't call me so early, you'll make me insane;".

and he threatens to bring out a new up-to-date, topsyturvy edition of Dr. Watts's rhymed homilies.

That the great increase in insanity will have a thorough sitting there is no doubt; and we are prepared to see the want of sufficient sleep take rank as the first great cause. The farmers, many of them, dominated by the old saw, see in imagination a vision of the poor-house if by chance outraged Nature takes her legitimate revenge and causes them to rise a half-hour later on some morning succeeding a very wearisome day, and without knowing it they are robbing themselves of the sleep worth the most to them—i.e., that hour of brain-restoring slumber that comes when all vigilance of the nerves is gone and the man is thoroughly "wrapped in oblivion," as the old novelists used to say. So habituated are many of them to see disaster in any shortening of the hours of labor, that all the agricultural machines that abolish half the toil might as well not have been invented for them. Certainly a more rational conduct of life ought to follow the diffusion of the knowledge of the structure and needs of the brain.

Among the contributory causes we fancy that the kerosene lamp plays an important role—not that we would deprive one household of that blessed bit of liberated sunshine. Who can blame the farmer's wife and family for indulging themselves in the hours of peace and possibly of enchantment they owe to it when, the drudgery of the day, ended, they take the journal or the book in hand. Their mistake is in letting it fascinate too long, if they are in a home subject to an iron rule of needless too-early rising. In the days of tallow candles there was no such temptation; but while enjoying the sweets they should not make themselves liable to be treated to the bitters.

"It takes more strength of mind and will to go to bed from among pleasant evening surroundings than for any other act of daily life," we once heard a shrewd person remark. The hygiene of enough sleep needs constant reiteration.

### How to Hear the Truth.\*

BY REV. ADDISON P. FOSTER, D.D.

On right hearing depends our knowledge of the truth and therefore our Christian life. The parable of the sower explains the duty of hearing.

Christ in justifying his resort to parables set forth

#### CERTAIN PRINCIPLES CONCERNING HEARING.

The first of these is that practice in hearing makes hearing easy. Our understanding of truth depends on how and what we hear. When once we have received truth it is easier to receive more truth. If we open a channel all that flows through deepens the channel and prepares the way for a larger flow. For this reason that which is sometimes a puzzle to the learned is simplicity itself to the humble believer. The former has not learned the rudiments of Christianity, how then can he understand its mysteries? The latter has accepted the truth and the more he learns the more he is able to receive.

A second principle is that right hearing is a matter of choice. Christ spoke in parables because many about him had determined not to hear and be saved. Belief is under control. The sin connected with unbelief consists in refusing to consider testimony. The truth will set us free if only we will receive it, but some deliberately turn their back on truth lest it force them to a different life.

The third principle is that the reception of truth is a privilege. Those who heard Christ were blessed. They enjoyed what eager prophets were denied. Nothing gives us greater happiness or is more elevating to character than to open the heart to the sunlight of divine truth.

In Christ's parable of the sower he instances

#### THREE WRONG WAYS TO HEAR THE TRUTH.

There is the *hardened and indifferent hearer*. His heart is like the well trodden path through a grain field. The truths of the Gospel fall on it and make no impression. His thoughts run over a definite course till they have beaten the path hard and now he can think of nothing else. He may be a business man or a scientist or a pleasure-seeker. No matter what he is, he is prejudiced and pre-

\*A Meditation based on (Matt. xiii. 1-23, in the Bible Study Union Course on "The Teachings of Christ.")