

Messenger and Visitor

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—An exchange advises an 'Anxious Enquirer' to go to church these summer Sundays "even if you are on your vacation and the village preacher is prosy." It may be added for the comfort of the anxious one that the village preacher will probably be found not so much less worth hearing than the incumbent of the city pulpit as the summer tourist is apt to imagine.

—It is well known that moderate indulgence in intoxicating drinks is much more common among the religious people of Great Britain than among the same class in America. It is gratifying, however, to know that total abstinence is fast becoming the rule among the people of the evangelical churches of England, and especially is this true of the ministers. In the Congregational body, it is stated, 84 per cent. of the ministers are now total abstainers as against 34 per cent. in 1886, while 264 out of 280 students in the theological colleges are pledged against the use of intoxicants.

—The church is a much safer place in respect to life and limb than the excursion train, yacht or steamer. This is not the highest and most important reason that can be presented in favor of going to church rather than on an excursion, but it is one which a large class of persons can appreciate. How many people during the past month have gone thoughtlessly and unprepared to their final account who might still be in possession of life and its opportunities if they had not chosen to go on a Sunday excursion rather than to church!

—The Watchman reminds its readers that the attempt to support a cause by suppressing the truth is neither legitimate nor wise, and notes the application of the principle in respect to Biblical criticism, scientific investigation and politics. "It is not the part of a fair-minded man to fear the light. He welcomes it from every quarter. He is anxious to get all the facts and to base his theories and beliefs upon them. That is the only temper possible for a Christian whether in religion, reform or politics."

—It was Daniel Webster, was it not, who encouraged a young man who complained that the professions were crowded, by saying "There is always room at the top." The remark is as true today as it was in Webster's time, and it is just as legitimate an incentive for a young man to do his best. It is true too of the Christian ministry that there is 'room at the top.' The ministry is not likely to be overcrowded by men of the best type. But let us not make the mistake of supposing that the best minister is necessarily the man who is most likely to be called to a prominent pulpit at a high salary. Some of the best—yes and in the best sense most influential—ministers are humble toilers in country parishes.

—"The Montreal Witness" expresses the opinion that the prohibition resolutions moved in the House of Commons by Mr. Flint would have been better had they simply "challenged the Government to carry out the mandate of the plebiscite at least in those parts of the country which had demanded prohibition, by establishing prohibition in those provinces and protecting them against intrusion from other provinces, leaving the Government to invent the method, a task which properly falls to it, in view of its having initiated the plebiscite, which has had the effect of dividing the country into sections on this subject." The Witness has heard it said, on the authority of a member of the party, that the Government has something to propose and that it will be announced before the close of the session. If this is a fact there will be general interest in learning what the Government has to propose.

Up to the time of our going to press we have heard of no proposition from the Government on the subject, although the end of the session is supposed to be very near.

—On our third page will be found an article on "The comparative cost of living in India and in Canada," reprinted from 'The Canadian Baptist'. The article was prepared by Rev. A. P. McDiarmid, Secretary of the Baptist F. M. Board of Ontario and Quebec, with a view to meeting certain enquiries and criticisms as to the expense of carrying on mission work in India, and, as will be seen, it consists largely of information as to the cost of living in India furnished by missionaries connected with the Ontario and Quebec Board. As the matter has been the subject of repeated inquiry and remark in our denominational gatherings in these provinces also, we have thought it well to place the information contained in this article in the hands of the readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. It will be generally admitted we think that it shows quite clearly that the salaries being paid our missionaries in India are not in excess of reasonable requirements.

—In connection with the negro problem of the Southern States it is worthy of note that, at a meeting, held last week, of the Elders' Council of the African Methodist Episcopal church of Georgia and Alabama, a resolution was unaproposely adopted recommending the appointment by the Council of a committee to set before Congress the deplorable condition of the negro population of the United States and to petition that body for an appropriation of \$100,000,000 to start a line of steamships between the United States and Africa in order to enable all negroes who may desire to do so to emigrate to Africa. Bishop Turner, who presided at the Council, explained that he did not desire the Government to carry emigrants free to Africa but to take them direct at reasonable cost. The present means of getting to Africa is too expensive to be available for emigrants. What is chiefly notable in the action of the Council is that it is a revival of an old idea which had fallen into disfavor among Afro-American leaders. The attempts hitherto of the negro at self-rule do not go to inspire great confidence in the belief that, as a colonist in Africa, the Afro-American would, under favorable circumstances, work out his own salvation, but the experiment may be at least worthy of favorable consideration, since it certainly is not easy to say in what other direction the solution of the problem is to be found.

—If one would be at pains to make note of the crimes, fatalities and serious accidents of one kind and another which are reported as resulting from indulgence in strong drink, he might have constantly on hand plenty of evidence to support the severest arraignment of the liquor traffic. If the loss of life and property which, directly and indirectly, is chargeable in this country to the liquor business were set down item by item, the account for a single year would be something appalling. Within a few days from this writing there have come under our notice reports of the loss of four lives by drowning in the Maritime Provinces, and all directly chargeable to drink. One was that of a young man in York County who, after a prolonged spree, was found drowned under circumstances that indicated suicide. Another was the case of a man drowned in St. John harbor, the fatal result said to be due to the fact that the man himself and another who attempted to assist in his rescue were both under the influence of liquor. A third case occurred at Sydney, C. B., where two intoxicated men fought in a boat in which they were sailing, and, falling overboard, went to a watery grave.

—A recent issue of 'The Independent' has an interesting article by Elizabeth A. Sharp, concerning the results of excavations which have been in progress during the past three years at the famous classic Greek town at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt and the neighboring region of the Fayûm. This work is being carried on by Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt, under the auspices of the Egypt Exploration Fund. During these labors they have come upon a number of exceedingly valuable papyri and objects of domestic use buried under rubbish heaps and debris of fallen houses and temples. They are to publish shortly a second edition of an illustrated series of translations of the papyri, with an account of a por-

tion of their valuable discoveries. These fragments of palm leaves are inscribed with Greek characters in black ink and in many cases are in a condition of excellent preservation. They date back to the first three centuries A. D. A portion of the MSS. consists of portions of the New Testament and other reputed apostolic writings, a second section contains portions of the works of Greek classics and a third includes private and public documents of varied description written by officials and other inhabitants of Oxyrhynchus. It is said that these newly discovered MSS. will furnish invaluable notes for a social and economical history of that period. The article does not intimate that in the MSS. of New Testament and other early Christian writings mentioned above there is anything of special interest, but it would seem reasonable to hope that as such explorations proceed matter of that kind of the greatest value may be brought to light.

—In the passage in Ezekiel's prophecy respecting the valley of dry bones the prophet is generally supposed to be relating the experiences of a vision or dream. "Ezekiel's Great Vision" is the title of the Bible lesson connected with the passage as given in the International Series. But Ezekiel himself says nothing about a vision. He says that he was set down in the midst of the valley and it was full of bones, and the bones were very many and very dry. He narrates what was said to him and what he, said in reply; and how as by commandment he prophesied, there was a noise and a shaking; then the coming together of bones each in its place, the clothing of these skeletons with sinews, flesh and skin and finally the entrance of the vital breath or spirit, so that "they lived and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." The prophet says nothing about a vision and so far as the form of the narrative is concerned it might be an account of what actually took place. But the passage is not generally so understood nor does the devout Bible reader feel that the passage is less inspired or of less value for being a creation of the prophet's quickened imagination rather than a narrative of actual fact. Whether fact or inspired fiction, it equally served the prophet's purpose as a parable illustrating the power and purpose of God to raise up and restore his people, though, as a nation, they seemed as hopelessly without life or strength as dry bones scattered upon the face of the earth. And if some readers understand certain other passages of Scripture, as for instance the book of Jonah, as a work of the imagination rather than literal history, it is not necessary to infer that they thereby deny the inspiration and the authoritative value of such Scriptures.

—For the making of an army more than mere bodies and armor is necessary. However many bodies there may be, however handsome stalwart, and completely armed they may be, yet if there is in them no soul, no mind to inspire intelligent action and purpose, there is in such a host no power for offensive or defensive action. A little child were stronger than they all. So of a Sunday School or church. There may be great numbers, with organization and equipment at their best, but if spiritual power be absent, church and school must sadly fail of fulfilling their highest purpose. This is a truth prominently suggested by the Bible lesson for next Sunday and upon which emphasis will doubtless be laid, and wisely so. At the same time we should not ignore the immense value of organization and equipment. Life is the great thing, but life must have an organism through which it may find expression. There is no strength in dead bodies, but we cannot have a soldier without a body, and the better developed and armed that body is the more effective will the soldier be when inspired by the breath of life. The mightiest engine that human brain and hand ever constructed is practically valueless without motive power which no engine can originate. But we do not therefore conclude that it is folly to construct engines. It is by them and the various machinery connected with them that men are able to make the great powers of nature their servants. So also in the church and in all religious work the grand essential is power,—power that comes from God. But that power needs its human engines and machinery through which to work,—and the more nearly perfect these are the more valuable will be the results. Other things being equal, the Sunday School which has wise and well educated teachers and excellent organization will do better work than