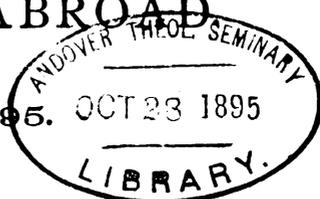


THE CHURCH AT HOME AND ABROAD

NOVEMBER, 1895. OCT 23 1895



CURRENT EVENTS AND THE KINGDOM.

SUNDAY ATHLETICS.

"Sunday athletics are a menace. They do not, and cannot, attract the best class of participants or spectators." This is the conclusion of the writer who prepares each week the department "Amateur Sport" in *Harper's Weekly*. He calls upon athletic and bicycling clubs, as well as individual wheelmen, to support the League of American Wheelmen in its effort to stop Sunday racing; and adds that respect to tradition and sentiment ought to be sufficient to suggest the observance of the day of rest to all right-thinking citizens and clubs.

THE PEARL OF THE ANTILLES.

This island,—first of the discoveries of Columbus—has continued longest under the rule of Spain. The Cubans certainly have as great cause for discontent as did those Spanish-American nations that threw off the yoke seventy years ago. They have suffered the greed, rapacity and misrule of Spanish domination—the grinding taxation, until tax-paying capacity is well nigh exhausted, and the island has become "the most heavily taxed of all the countries of the civilized world." This struggle for freedom, which has been carried on since 1868 cannot be viewed with indifference.

A NOBLE GOVERNOR.

"The flag of Texas flies over the vanguard of the army of good morals," said a Chicago daily. A proposed prize-fight within the bounds of Texas was regarded by Governor Culberson as an affront to the moral sense

and enlightened progress of that commonwealth. Such a brutal exhibition would be a dishonor to the state and a disgrace to civilization. And since the decision of a judge in one of the courts was likely to hinder the execution of the laws of the state, the Governor promptly called a special session of the Legislature "to denounce prize fighting in clear and unambiguous terms, and prohibit the same; putting the law into immediate operation, and making provision for its enforcement." He felt that to prevent this invasion of barbarism, and to maintain the honor of the state, no cost was too great. The Legislature convened October 1, and within three hours, and with but five dissenting votes, the necessary action was taken.

AN UNRIGHTEOUS ACQUISITION.

France, in the assertion of her alleged historic rights, and to enforce the treaty of January 6, 1886, has been engaged for a year in hostilities against Madagascar. The treaty, ambiguously worded, was accepted by the Malagasy Government as explained and conditioned by an accompanying supplementary document. This appendix, which fixed the boundary line of the French establishment at Diego Suarez, was not submitted to the French Chamber with the treaty; and M. de Freycinet, when asked whether he considered himself bound by the appendix as to this line, replied: "No, I only hold by the treaty, and trust we shall bring about a progressive extension of that boundary line." Says Karl Blind, in the *Fortnightly Review*:—"The French minister was not ashamed to avow in

way of all the rest. Seated on a bench of rough pine by a small fire on the clay hearth was a lank, barefooted man in scant apparel. His right side was paralyzed. He was covered with ashes from the hearth by the wind blowing down the chimney. His wife, with a girl baby and two other daughters, composed his family. The oldest boy was shot down while

at work, and brought home dead. The oldest daughter was deaf and dumb. The second daughter had gone astray. This is a picture of what is constantly seen, with variations, by your missionary. The girls are now in a Sabbath-school. To my question, 'Do you pray?' the old man replied: 'I try to, when the pain takes hold of me.'

FREEDMEN.

FIGHTING AGAINST GROWTH.

That is what the Freedmen's Board seems to be doing all the time. The work under its care is instinct with life, and this life is a divine life. The source of its vitality is from on high. To fight against it seems almost like fighting against God. "The Kingdom of God is like to a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field, which, indeed, is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

To repress the growth of the mustard seed is to do violence to natural law. To repress the growth of that Kingdom, which is here compared to the growth of the seed, is to do violence to spiritual law; and yet, somehow or other, those to whom the management of our work among the Freedmen is committed, seemed driven to the extremity of doing all within their power to keep the work under its care within the prescribed limits of last year; and, indeed, within the prescribed limits of year before last, and the year before that. For the work of repression and the effort to stop growth, for which the Board would be responsible, has been going on for the last three years. The effort of the Chinese mother to keep the foot of her baby girl down to certain limits by means of bandages, certainly does not give a result that we Christian people would regard as beautiful. There is danger that the forced repression of the work under our care may yet mar some of the beauty that God meant should shine forth from a naturally developed and finely propor-

tioned work that he meant we should do in connection with the growth and development of this recently liberated race. Will not God hold his servants responsible, if they stand in the way of the free operation of those spiritual laws by which men and women are meant to grow up in the image of their Maker, and advance in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Church gives us funds with which to plow the field, and with which to provide and sow broadcast the seed which we expect will spring up and grow; but the Church withholds its hand in the hour of harvest, and says: "Keep the corn in the blade, or at least in the ear, but, by all means, do not let it come to the full corn in the ear." We are not able to gather the harvest; there are not reapers enough; or, if there were, we are still short of sickles; or, even with the sickle reaper and the supplied, we have no barns in which to garner the grain. "Blow, oh ye cold winds over the fields, and check the growth! Come, oh ye biting frosts, and nip the tender bud! Withhold, oh ye heavens, the early and the latter rain, and let all things conspire to give us a meagre crop! It is best that it should be so. The increase will embarrass us. An abundant yield is what we must especially avoid."

How strange such words as these! How unnatural the conception! How inexcusable such a feeling and such a course would be in our work of planting and sowing and reaping in the natural world!

Every year our schools turn out men and women qualified for new work in new places.

Every year the faithful missionary widens

his field and plants a new mission in some hitherto destitute spot. Every year the Sunday-school worker opens up new schools where hitherto none existed. These new workers that have gone through our seminaries and colleges, go back to their homes and send us word that there is an opening in the neighborhood where they live for a new school. The pastor tells us the newly organized church adjacent to his old work, needs a new building; and the Sabbath-school worker proclaims to us that unless the little schools which he has planted are nourished and protected, they will die from exposure and want. But to all this the Board has but one answer. There must be no new work started, and the new workers must stand in the market-place until the eleventh hour and say, as an excuse for their idleness: "No man hath hired us." The little houseless Church organizations must be told to struggle along without a place that they can call their home; and the new missions must be praised for their zeal and their love for the truth, but advised to do the best they can without any help.

Such is the general attitude of our Freedmen's Board toward its own work. Such is the general tone of its answers to the pleading suppliant for help. Such is its forced policy of repressing and retarding and stunting, because of lack of funds and for fear of incurring additional debt, against which the Church at large would earnestly protest with no uncertain voice.

The first and right conception of the function of a Mission Board, it would seem, should be to encourage and stimulate the growth of its work to its utmost extent; and I doubt not this was the conception in the mind of the Church when the Board of Missions for Freedmen was established, with its headquarters in Pittsburgh, thirty years ago. This, too, I doubt not, is the conception of the nature of the work to which they have been called, as it now lies in the mind of every member and officer of this Board. What we are doing now is not what we want to do; nor is it what we think we ought to do. But necessity knows no law, and the inexorable drives us to a course at once repugnant to our better feelings, and at variance with our high-

est wishes and hopes. The money necessary for the work is not at our command. The contributions from the churches are not commensurate with the crying needs of the field. The increase in the gifts of God's people does not keep pace with the growth and expansion with God's work. We are not straitened in God. We are straitened in ourselves. The Board could have wisely planted fifty parochial schools this year where they have not planted one. They could have aided at least forty congregations in building churches, where they have not built one; and to-day many little flocks called by the Presbyterian name are as sheep without a shepherd because of our inability to send to them a man able to lead them into green pastures and beside the still waters.

How does this abnormal condition of things come about? Let the 3,415 churches that gave us no collections last year answer the question. From these churches there might have come to us not only a contribution corresponding to their ability, but from their Sabbath-schools and their Young People's societies and their Women's societies, there might also have issued a stream of influence in the way of a few dollars from each that would have made glad the very City of God.

Who will come up to the help of the Lord in this work, and relieve the members of the Board of Missions for Freedmen from the unenviable task and necessity of continually fighting against the growth of its own work? Its work is the Church's work, and the whole body of God's people stand related to it as the parent does to the child. What would you think of parents who would stunt its own offspring? The question carries with it its own answer. May God help us all to see our duty, and may He give us grace to perform it.

E. P. C.

—A missionary to the Jews in Breslau reports that the Jews in a certain town, being about to sell their synagogue, showed their preference, at no small sacrifice, to get it delivered over to the use of a Christian congregation rather than have it profaned to a secular use. From a feeling of piety towards their own building they are attracted to the Christian services now held in it, and some have shown a liking for the gospel.