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them that come to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth a Priest to make intercession for them."¹ This, then, is our conclusion so far. The work of Christ in heaven is properly sacerdotal. It satisfies in this respect the cravings of the universal conscience and the requirements of the whole revelation of God.

Of the things we are speaking this is the sum: "We have such an High Priest Who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."²

T. T. PEROWNE.

ART. IV.—LAY WORK IN THE ARMY.

THERE are many good people who hold the opinion that Christian work in the army is a subject altogether too remote to be of interest to them, as they have no connection with military affairs. They attach no more importance to what is being done to promote the moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social welfare of our soldiers, than to any other good work which they approve of, but which does not personally affect them. I believe, however, that it is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of paying attention to work done among soldiers, and for the following reasons.

In the *first* place there will, if the short-service system exists long enough, be upwards of one million³ men scattered all over the country, who have passed six years, more or less, of training as soldiers. It cannot be a matter of indifference to anyone who desires the welfare of his country, whether that training shall have a tendency to develop dissolute, lawless, drunken habits on the one hand, or to cultivate orderly, sober, industrious habits on the other. In the one case, the country would suffer considerably from the effects of the introduction of the new system of short service; in the other, it would be a considerable gainer. This will be all the more apparent when it is remembered that these young men will, in their turn, become husbands and heads of families. Out of the 30,000,000 inhabitants of England, when half are deducted for the female sex, and a large number are deducted for children and old

¹ Heb. vii. 24, 25, 28.

² Heb. viii. 1.

³ Roughly speaking, 30,000 men enlist annually, and as the army does not increase, that number, after deducting a small percentage for deaths, passes into the Reserve, and from thence into civil life. If the majority enlist at twenty years of age, and leave the army at twenty-six, according to the scale of the probabilities of life they will have thirty-five years to live. 30,000 multiplied by thirty-five makes a little over a million, not one of whom would be over sixty-one years of age.

people, the men who have passed through the army will form no inconsiderable percentage of the manhood of the nation.

In the *second* place, when we consider that upwards of 80,000 men are serving in countries abroad, subject to the careful scrutiny of Hindoos, Buddhists, Mohammedans, Parsees, and Fetish-worshippers, it must, I think, be admitted that the influence of soldiers for good or for evil, as a body who "profess and call themselves Christians," must be very considerable. The two great missionary societies of our Church, and all the Nonconformist societies put together, are unable to maintain more than 800 missionaries, a small number when compared with the 80,000 soldiers. It must be very obvious, therefore, that one solitary missionary will have very uphill work, if, while he is delivering his message to the heathen, a hundred men, who call themselves by the same sacred name, practise something very different. It is useless for people at home to say that soldiers, beyond merely bearing the name, are the last to wish to be thought Christians, and that as a body they make no profession of religion. The Hindoos, Buddhists, and Mohammedans by whom they are surrounded make no fine distinctions of this kind. It is enough for them that our soldiers are called Christians. Every young officer who has been to India knows the time-honoured story of the cringing native who wanted a situation as servant, and, by way of self-recommendation, said, "Me Christian; me eat beef, pork, drink, and get drunk same like master." They very naturally judge of Christianity by its professors, and consequently often consider our national failings to be the result of the teachings of our religion.

The natives of a conquered country are extremely observant of the habits of their conquerors. I remember hearing, during the last war in South Africa, an officer say that one day, when the troops were all at Divine worship in the open air, a Kaffir came up to him, and, in broken English, asked what all the regiments were about, making such a noise? The officer replied that they were worshipping God. The Kaffir then asked *why* they worshipped God? To which the officer replied, "I suppose they want to go to heaven." The next question the Kaffir asked was, "Where is heaven?" The officer pointed upwards. He was then asked if it was a good place? On his replying in the affirmative, the Kaffir laughed and said, "Then why English not annex it?" His idea—no doubt a common one among many—was that the prominent characteristic of Christian Englishmen is to annex everything good that comes in their way. The sale of opium in China, the annexation mania, the traffic in intoxicating

drinks, are all more or less associated, in the minds of the heathen, with the teaching of Christianity!

Having attempted to show that the army, in addition to being a mere fighting machine, has an influence for good or for evil at *home* and *abroad*, I shall now proceed to give a brief account of some of the voluntary agencies that are at work among our soldiers. In doing so I shall confine myself to the voluntary agencies only, in contradistinction to the paid Government officials, such as the chaplains, who are the recognised State instructors of religion in their respective Churches and denominations. The divisions which seem naturally to suggest themselves are :

1. Army Scripture-Readers.
2. Soldiers' Homes.
3. Temperance work.
4. Soldiers' meetings.

I am afraid space will forbid my going into details on other branches of work, such as soldiers' gardens, reading and recreation rooms, cricket, and games of all sorts, coffee-shops, mothers' meetings, Sunday schools, penny readings, and many other influences which must have a civilizing and ameliorating effects on the men, and, to a certain extent, must combine to prove a counter-attraction to the public-houses, low music-halls, and dancing-saloons.

1. *The Army Scripture-Readers' Society*.—During the Crimean War two societies were formed for the good of the soldier. The one had his temporal, and the other his spiritual welfare at heart. These two societies afterwards united under the name of the Army Scripture-Readers' and Soldiers' Friend Society. Its object is to spread a saving knowledge of Christ among our soldiers, both at home and abroad. It employs about ninety-four agents, almost all of whom are old soldiers. The Scripture-readers are directed not only to aim at bringing souls to Christ, but also to try to gain an influence over the men, and thus to become their true friends. They carry on their work by visiting the men in their barrack-rooms, in hospitals, in the prison-cells, in the married men's quarters, and wherever they find that they can gain admittance.

These men thus occupy a most important position in the carrying out of Christian work in the army. The chaplain and the officer, from their social position and rank, often find it difficult to get at men. The Army Scripture-readers, however, have no social difficulties to overcome. As a rule they are old non-commissioned officers, and thus understand the ways of the men in their barrack-rooms, and can sit down for a quiet chat on a bedcot, or go out for a walk, without any special

attention being called to the fact. Yet, as they are rather better educated than the men, they can hold their own in conversation, and in conducting meetings and Bible-readings.

The Bishop of Madras, who is, I believe, the oldest bishop in Asia, and one who has for a long time had soldiers under his episcopal care, made use of the following words in his Charge to his chaplains at Madras :

But where the number of soldiers is large, you should not fail to secure the assistance of a Scripture-reader. Such an agent is now indispensable in a military cantonment. He can be useful at seasons and under circumstances when the clergyman cannot. He can ascertain more exactly the character and feelings of individual soldiers. He can greatly assist in bringing religion into their homes and hearts. And wherever there is a considerable number of troops, I strongly recommend that application be made to the Army Scripture-Readers' Society for a reader.

This shows the value Bishop Gell places upon the work of the Society.

Among the earnest Christians in the army there are necessarily men belonging to different sects and denominations. It requires, therefore, the greatest tact and judgment to work among them. Narrow and exclusive sectarian views will not do. If ever there was a profession in which the Christian man must "learn to live and let live," that one is the army. Earnest vital godliness, combined with a large-hearted catholic toleration of the special peculiarities of others, is what is needed for a worker who would win souls in the army. The committee of the Army Scripture-Readers' Society, therefore, wisely forbid their agents ever to attempt to proselytize. Each agent on joining the Society should take for his motto, "I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."¹ As long as these large-hearted, catholic-spirited principles are adhered to by the Society, so long, I believe, will it be a real power for good among our soldiers. What nobler conception, or what higher object, can any Society have than that of spreading a saving knowledge of Christ by means of reading and expounding the Word of God? To say

¹ I remember many years ago hearing a story told of a dying soldier, which struck me at the time as what ought to be the characteristic of all work among soldiers. A visitor said to the dying man, who was a humble rejoicing believer, "What Church do you belong to?" The man looked up and said, "The Church of Christ." "But," said the visitor, "of what persuasion are you?" "I am of this persuasion," said the dying soldier, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord." He purposely avoided the question of his own particular denomination.

that it has faults, and that all its men are not perfect, is merely to admit that its affairs are managed by human beings. But the committee of the Army Scripture-Readers' Society, nevertheless, are making an earnest and honest attempt to get the best men they can to do the work of reading and explaining Holy Scripture among our soldiers.

2. *Soldiers' Homes.*—Another institution that acts a very important part in Christian work in the army is the Soldiers' Home. I believe the first one started was at Sandgate for the use of the troops at Shorncliffe. Miss Papillon, who still carries it on, may thus claim to have been the originator of the movement. Very shortly afterwards, however, a very much larger and more important Home was started by Mrs. Daniells, an officer's widow, at Aldershot. The great success which attended it was, no doubt, the cause of other Homes being started elsewhere. There are very few regiments in the British army that have not been stationed at Aldershot for a longer or shorter period during the last twenty years, and there are very few of these regiments, I believe, which are without men who have derived benefit from having come in contact with that Home. Nor has this been the case only among the men, for I have met some officers, and heard of many more, who have reaped great blessings at the Aldershot Home. When Mrs. Daniells died the officers and soldiers of the Aldershot camp, headed by General Sir Hope Grant, showed their appreciation of her devoted services by following in very large numbers her remains to their last resting-place. Her daughter has most ably supplied her mother's place. She has also extended the work very much by forming Homes at Chatham, Colchester, Plymouth, and elsewhere.

There are now very few, if any, of the larger military stations without Soldiers' Homes, based more or less on the model which was found to work so well at Aldershot. Of all these Homes and Institutes, perhaps none are so worthy of attention as the one at Portsmouth, planned and carried out, in the face of much opposition, by Miss Robinson, "The Soldier's Friend," who was, I believe, at one time a fellow-labourer with Mrs. Daniells. I have heard the complaint made that the Portsmouth Home is conducted on too secular principles, and has become merely a philanthropic, rather than a religious work. This complaint may, however, arise from a misunderstanding of the surroundings and needs of Portsmouth, which are very special, and which differ very much from those of any other station. Portsmouth is the one port from which all troops embark for foreign service, and to which all troops return on the completion of their tour of foreign service. Thus, in addition to its being a very large

naval station, it is an enormous military one. It enjoys the unenviable reputation of having attracted a very large proportion of Jewish money-lenders, "land-sharks," and improper characters of all sorts, whose sole object is to prey upon the British soldier. At one time there was hardly a respectable house where a poor woman could get a lodging for the night.¹

When regiments arrive at Portsmouth after many years' service abroad, often before a month is over the hard-earned savings of ten years are spent, with nothing to show for them but lost good-conduct stripes, missing chevrons, and stained characters. I write entirely from memory, but I do not think I am exaggerating when I say I heard of one regiment which within one month after arrival had lost five hundred good-conduct badges, and had spent nearly £3,000: that is, an average of about one good-conduct badge and about £6 for each man.

Miss Robinson's object in the formation of an Institute was not only to provide a place conducted on very much the principles of Young Men's Christian Institutes, where soldiers might resort to find amusement, recreation, instruction, and edification, but also to provide a place where soldiers' wives and children might find a decent lodging, and where widows who had returned home alone and desolate might receive a sympathetic welcome. This, I think, she has succeeded in doing. I remember coming home as Adjutant to one of the Indian troop-ships, bringing six hundred and seventy invalids, many sick wives, children, and widows. The great bulk of them were sent on at once to Netley, but several, especially the widows, had to land at Portsmouth. An agent for Miss Robinson visited our ship directly we came into the docks, and called on me in my official capacity, and asked me to introduce him to the Commanding Officer, so that he might inform him about the Institute. Those who were not otherwise provided went there, and found a warm welcome, with food and beds ready at hand.

Those who have never left England can perhaps hardly understand what it is to return, as many of these poor creatures do, alone and friendless, to a country in which they have not been for many years. England is called "home" by many in a foreign land, and around its memory are asso-

¹ Yet Portsmouth, be it remembered, is a place where an enormous number of women, who have been married without leave and whose husbands have been ordered abroad, arrive to see the last of their husbands. Many of these poor young wives, left behind, almost penniless, find it so nearly impossible to live respectable lives, and so very easy to live a life of sin, that it is hardly matter of wonder which they choose when purity often means starvation.

ciated bright hopes of happiness and joy. Well would it have been for some had they never returned, to have their bright dreams dissipated and to curse the day when they set foot on their native shore! Never has anyone better deserved the name of "Soldiers' Friend" than she who formed the idea, and carried it out, of welcoming these returning ones to a real Soldiers' Home.

The other Soldiers' Homes, though not on the magnificent scale of Miss Robinson's, are all of them quite large enough for their requirements. They consist generally of a large hall, for meetings, temperance lectures, magic-lanterns, penny readings, Gospel addresses, etc.; a reading-room and library; and a smoking-room, which is also used for games. There is usually one room set apart as a prayer-room, where soldiers can retire alone. The daily or weekly prayer-meeting is usually held in this room. There is also a bar and a refreshment-room, where men can buy tea, coffee, cocoa, or other non-intoxicating drinks, also bread and butter, cold or hot meat, etc.; in fact, everything is done to make these places a counter-attraction to the resorts where the men can receive only injury to both body and soul.

Each Home has a lady superintendent and one assistant, who do all in their power to make the Institute attractive to the men. These ladies soon get to know the names and characters of those men who attend frequently. They form among them singing-classes and glee clubs; and in a thousand and one little ways, by their self-denying efforts and services, which are rendered free of any charge, help to make the men feel at home and happy. When the regiments leave for another station the ladies write off to the lady superintendent of the Home at the new station, giving the names of the men who attended; thus, on arrival at another place, they receive a warm welcome, and are made to feel quite at home. As long as such spheres of usefulness exist for unmarried ladies, England will want no convents for women to shut themselves up in. These are, in the truest sense of the words, Sisters of Mercy.

3. *Temperance Work.*—Having mentioned the "Soldiers' Friend" of England, I feel that I must not omit to mention one who has received the name of the "Soldiers' Friend" in India. Almost every adherent of total-abstinence principles in the army has heard of the Rev. Gilson Gregson, who was the originator of the Indian Temperance Association, which, though not yet ten years old, has upwards of 10,000 adherents among the soldiers in India alone. Curiously enough, India has taken the lead in temperance work as far as soldiers are concerned. There are, of course, other causes; but I cannot help

thinking that the main cause of this is to be found in the earnest, energetic, and sensible way Mr. Gregson went to work in the matter.

There were, of course, many disintegrated temperance units scattered about throughout that vast empire—almost as large as Europe—before Mr. Gregson took up the work. It was he, however, who united all these together in one large and powerful Association. At this present moment, I believe, there is hardly a regiment or a military cantonment throughout India that has not got a more or less flourishing temperance society. The Association has become a real power for good in the country; and if one may judge from the generous subscriptions of the different Viceroy, Governors, Commanders-in-Chief, and principal staff officers, from time to time, the Association certainly has something more than their official support. I believe that some of the recent improvements in the canteen regulations have been brought about through the exertions and influence of the originator of the Temperance Association.

Mr. Gregson went out to India as a missionary to the natives; but finding that the drunkenness of the English soldiers was such a stumbling-block in the way of sober Hindoos and Mohammedans, who met him with the taunt, "Preach *first* to your own countrymen," he acted on their advice, and made this a part of his occupation. Gradually the work grew upon him, and he felt more and more that he was called to that particular sphere of action. Eventually he withdrew from all connection with distinctly missionary work, and devoted his energies and abilities to the spread of the Gospel and temperance among soldiers. His plan during the six or seven cold and moderately cool months is to itinerate from place to place; during the remainder of the year he resides in one of the numerous hill stations, writing, organizing, and consolidating his work, and preparing for the next cold-weather campaign. He edits the Indian Temperance Magazine, *On Guard*, which is the recognised organ of the Association. As he is utterly unable to prepare papers during his tours of itinerating, the main part of this has to be done in advance, when at rest in the hills.¹

The temperance work among soldiers in England does not appear to be carried on so systematically as in India: true, there are many regiments, depôts, and military stations with good, healthy working societies. In addition to this, almost all the Soldiers' Homes and Institutes have a temperance

¹ At present Mr. Gregson is in Egypt, endeavouring to do for our brave soldiers there what he has so successfully done in India. I am pleased to observe that his interesting little book, "Through the Khyber Pass," was warmly commended in *THE CHURCHMAN*.

society in connection with their work; beyond this I know of no one organization which attempts to band all these societies together in one association. There are of course such societies as the Church of England Temperance Society, the National Temperance League, and the Order of Good Templars, all of which are doing an admirable work in the army: these, however, are composed mainly of civilians, and are not distinctly military organizations, though the National Temperance League has a military branch; but I am not aware that any information or statistics are published with regard to the work of temperance reform in the army. The different societies are not brought in any way into connection with each other; they exist as so many disintegrated units. I have never yet been able to ascertain how many abstainers there are in the army in England. In India, out of about 60,000 men, there are upwards of 10,000 abstainers; each abstainer on joining feels that he is one of a large number. Lists are published monthly showing the number of abstainers in each regiment; thus attention is called to the fact of the increase or decrease month by month. All this excites friendly emulation. Each regiment naturally vies with the others to head the list, and each president and secretary of a regimental temperance society feels a personal interest in the matter.

The authorities are, I feel sure, anxious in every way to help forward the cause of temperance in the army; but at present, without any organization, they are unable to ascertain the wishes of the great body of abstainers. A solitary society here and there does not represent this great body, nor can they expect to have their requests attended to. If, however, they were all united in one body, I feel sure that they would have every consideration paid to them. Just to give one illustration from among many: For many years the ship-ration at sea included porter. Whether men drank it or not they were charged the 2½d. for ship-rations; lately, however, the authorities have decided that the men who do not drink shall not be charged; and, if they elect, they may have an equivalent in the way of tea or coffee. No doubt the change would have taken place before if the matter had only been pointed out. There are so many little ways in which the cause might be advanced by the authorities without doing injustice to anyone else: these have only to be pointed out in the proper way, and they would be attended to.

It is an interesting thing to observe how differently the temperance movement is treated now by the powers that be in the army, from what it was at first. It was then looked upon with suspicion, and it was even considered an unsafe thing to permit associations among soldiers at all. One Colonel told me that he had been directed by a General to prevent all

societies of any sort in his regiment. Strangely enough, such secret societies as Freemasons were allowed, while Temperance Societies were discouraged. Now, however, all is changed; and not only are they allowed to exist, but frequently the Commanding Officer of the regiment presides, and one often hears of Generals attending and giving a few words of kindly encouragement to the men to remain firm in the paths of sobriety. His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief has, I am informed, expressed his approval of a form of pledge; and it certainly is no secret that the Duke of Connaught and Lord Wolseley are open supporters of the movement.

If it is true, as is so often asserted, that five-sixths of all crime in the army is due directly or indirectly to the influence of drink, the authorities certainly show their wisdom in giving encouragement to any voluntary system that does so much towards decreasing crime. They can make regulations with that object, but here their power ceases. They cannot possibly exercise any influence over the moral and spiritual nature of the men. Soldiers are not like the component parts of a rifle: mere interchangeable *things*, to be cleaned by regulation. Though they move *en masse*, like a machine, yet they are composed of units, each of which has high moral and spiritual powers, capable of development in a good or bad direction. If it can be proved that the sober, God-fearing soldier is more amenable to discipline, and performs his duty more conscientiously than his comrades, it would indeed be a very short-sighted policy to discourage such voluntary agencies as temperance societies, which do more than the provost-marshal, and a whole tribe of provost-sergeants and military police. It must ever be borne in mind, to the honour of the temperance soldier, that during the Indian Mutiny, on a sudden emergency arising, when many of their comrades were unfit for service through drink, it was "Havelock's Saints" whom the Commanding Officer felt he could rely on.

Moreover, if it is found that an enormous number of men, during peace-time, can perform their duties well without the use of intoxicating drinks, it will go far at all events towards showing that their use, however nice they may be, is not essential to the welfare of the soldier. This will remove intoxicating drink from the list of necessaries to the list of luxuries. But no soldier need expect luxuries on a campaign, so that one great item of expenditure and inconvenience may be abolished—the conveyance of intoxicating drink. If, however, the authorities were to attempt to make any experiments on the men, what an outcry would at once be raised about "robbing a poor man of his beer"! But what the authorities cannot insist on, they can greatly assist by encouraging volun-

tary agencies and societies to unite men together to forego willingly that which has been proved to be a great source of crime and of a considerable amount of disease, and which has not been proved to be absolutely essential to the welfare of a large body of healthy men, however useful it may be to the sickly.

Great as the encouragement has been on the part of the authorities, and zealous as many have been in the propagation of temperance principles, yet still much remains to be done. The love of drink is recognised as one of our vices as a nation, and soldiers are no exception to the general rule. Wherever the British army goes, there is the way marked out with broken bottles, old casks, and empty cases of spirits. I observed, even on the top of Majuba Hill, in South Africa, that the temporary cross erected over the grave of one of our bravest officers was formed out of an old brandy-case. On one side was recorded the name of the officer, and on the other the well-known three-star Hennessy's Cognac. No other wood in that advanced spot could be obtained. What a commentary on our national habits! When moving up the river to one of our frontier stations in Burmah, my old regiment halted for the night. On the banks were a few houses. Going to one shop—the only one in a distance of some 300 miles—I asked if I could obtain any stamps. The Chinaman who kept the shop evidently did not understand me, and said, "Brandy, sahib?" On repeating my request in another way, he replied, "Brandy-pawnee?" (water). Brandy, or brandy-and-water, were the only things he thought an Englishman could want. Certainly he kept little else in his small shop.

In poetical language we are told—

"The longest lane must have an ending,
And the tide will turn at last."

Dark as may have been the history of our army in the past, I believe the worst is over, and a healthier sentiment is setting in on the subject of drink. Drunkenness has quite ceased to be the universal thing it is reported to have been among officers, and soon one may hope to see it very much decreased among the lower ranks. I believe that already soldiers, far from being behindhand in this matter, are decidedly in advance of men of the same age and living under the same conditions in civil life. Almost every regiment now has a Total-Abstinence Society, and many of them are in a very flourishing condition. Even those men who do not join these societies, cannot but be influenced to a certain extent by them. They at all events see that a man can be a good soldier of his Queen and country, and yet be a sober, God-fearing man; and that not

to be a drunkard does not necessarily mean being either a "muff" or a "milk-sop." The whole training of a soldier has a tendency to make him clean, respectful, and orderly. If, in addition to these qualifications, by means of regimental temperance societies, the other qualification of sobriety can be added, the civilians of the future, instead of being ashamed of a relative who "listed to be a soldier," will become proud of him, as they have every right to expect that he will return a better citizen and a nobler man.

4. *Bible-Reading and Prayer-Meetings.*—One prominent feature of Christian work in the army is the little gathering of some form or other that usually takes place in many regiments and stations. It sometimes takes the form of a Bible-reading, and sometimes of a prayer-meeting. At other times an address is delivered by the one who presides. Whatever form it may take, and however much outsiders may ridicule it, there is no denying the fact that these little meetings are the centres around which the religious instincts of the men gather. Soldiers have not very strong views of Church government and organizations. Their Church-membership as a rule ceases the hour church-parade is dismissed. After that, they gladly unite with all "who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth." Those who are really in earnest do not find much sympathy in the barrack-room among their comrades, so by natural instinct they are all the more strongly bound with those who, like themselves, seek to serve the same Saviour.

It seems to be a law deeply implanted in human nature, that the few who find themselves cut off from the great majority, should unite together in small gatherings to discuss their one common bond of union. It is an instinct like that of self-preservation. Not only their very existence depends upon it, but without it there would be no hope of propagating their views. In a large number there are always a few timid, retiring ones, who have not quite decided to adopt the views of the despised minority. Like Nicodemus, these may attend stealthily one of these gatherings. Contact with others gives them confidence; and many of these shy ones afterwards become the boldest of the party. These little bands or societies of praying, God-fearing men are to the timid ones what the firm old oak is to the weak, clinging ivy that gathers around it. Without the support given by the oak, the ivy would fail to attain any height, even were it not killed by being trampled under foot. Many a solitary unit with religious convictions, would soon be lost sight of in the common herd of careless, indifferent men. Their convictions would soon be smothered or hidden carefully away. In contact with others, especially as among the few there are generally one or two bolder spirits,

they gain courage and confidence, and in their turn help to inspire others with those qualities. In the darkest days of the Jewish people, we are told that there were always a few who served their God, of whom it is recorded, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another."

The late Lord Lawrence, when Viceroy of India, gave orders that in every barrack a room should be set apart for the purpose of soldiers' religious meetings. It was called the Scripture-Reading Room. I am afraid that in many barracks in India this order has not been carried out. But the Order of Council still exists, giving dimensions and fittings, and in a great number of stations there is still the Scripture-Reading Room, a standing memorial of the earnest piety of one who, by prompt energetic measures, saved India during that terrible ordeal of the Indian Mutiny.

The Christian men of a regiment will meet together, whether rooms are provided or not. I remember at one station in India, where our men, finding that they could obtain no other place, appointed the rifle-butts as their rendezvous. In South Africa, one regiment, which was separated from the standing camp in which the field-force remained for a time after Sir George Colley's death, erected an arbour of branches of trees, where they held their evening meeting. In the standing camp itself, the General kindly allowed the men the use of a large tent which during the day was used as a library. If those who think that the devotional life is inseparably connected with ecclesiastical-shaped buildings and surroundings had only seen the heartiness and warmth of these gatherings, with no seat but a few sods, no lights but tallow candles, shaded by inverted beer-bottles with the bottoms knocked out, they might change their minds. I remember, when driving through Dublin one day, being much amused to see an advertisement, in large letters, assuring the public that "Aids to devotion were obtained direct from the French manufactories"! I can only say that I have never been present at more really devotional gatherings than those I witnessed in that camp, where absolutely all external so-called "aids" were entirely absent. The hearty singing, the earnest prayers, the deep attention, all bespoke intense reality and the true devotional spirit. Every Sunday night, and almost every week night, that large tent was crowded.

As in the case of the temperance movement, so in the matter of religious meetings, there has been a decided change in the right direction in the opinions of the powers that be. At one time there existed a very strong prejudice against any religious meetings in the army, with the exception of the one solitary church-parade every week. Now even the strictest

disciplinarians have to admit that, if religious meetings do no good, they at least do no harm, and consequently the old prejudice on the score of discipline has given way to a more tolerant spirit. I once asked a commanding officer for leave to conduct a meeting, and the answer I received was characteristic of what I mean. He had a habit of thinking aloud, and reasoning with himself, while at the same time giving his answer. It was to the following effect: "Men have theatricals, dances, concerts, and penny readings, and I do not see why they should not be allowed to have Bible-readings and prayer-meetings. Officers take part with the men in these things, and I do not see why they should not do so in religion. I hope your presence will have a moderating influence on the men, and prevent them from going to any extremes."

This officer was a man who made no profession of religion himself. He had, however, a peculiarly fair and impartial mind. He always acted on the principle that unless an actual breach of discipline was likely to occur, no restriction should be put on the pleasures or occupations of the men. Everybody, he thought, had a perfect right to choose their own way of amusing themselves and occupying their spare time, which was their own. Though very strict in matters of discipline and on parade, yet during recreation-time he left each one to enjoy himself as best he could, though personally he might not care for their particular form of enjoyment. Looking at it from this standpoint, which it must be remembered is the one every commanding officer has to view it from, it is certainly difficult to see what the objections can be to religious meetings. Among upwards of a thousand men, there must of necessity be diverse tastes and inclinations. Some like one thing and some another. Those who are fond of gardening need not run foul of those who devote themselves to cricket. The object of all officers should be to cater for the good of the men, and in some way or other to endeavour to get all to occupy their time profitably and sensibly. It is certainly difficult to see why religion or temperance, even if not encouraged, should have in bygone days ever been excluded from the list of rational enjoyments.

There may have been injudicious officers who acted unwisely, and there may have been hypocritical professors among the men who joined these meetings from unworthy motives, more especially to "curry favour" with the officers. But what position in life is there where we are not more or less accustomed to this sort of thing? Anyone, however, with a fair amount of judgment, can see through these characters. I believe that in the army far less of this kind of hypocrisy occurs than elsewhere. There is too much scoffing and

sneering, as a rule, for men to make a profession of religion which is not supported by reality.

If a breach of discipline occurs, it would of course be dealt with in the same way as if it occurred in any other place. I have, however, asked many experienced officers, who have taken a deep personal interest in the spiritual and moral welfare of the men, and they all bear testimony, as is only natural, to the good behaviour of the God-fearing soldiers. My own experience of them is that there is an earnest desire among them to do their duty honestly and conscientiously. Those who serve their God well are not the men to neglect the service of their Queen and country. They render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. I have known many who have acted on the principle of the young shoeblick, who when converted said: "If I have to clean boots, I will try and make them brighter than anyone else," to the glory of God.

Enough has been advanced, I trust, to interest my readers in the welfare of the soldiers, and I hope that those who have the opportunity will show their practical sympathy with Christian work in the army. The better the man, the better the soldier. Other things being equal, that army will be the best that contains the most heroes, to whom the description would be applicable:

"Truest friend and noblest foe."

I feel I cannot better bring this article to a conclusion than by quoting the words of our late beloved Archbishop. In a speech at Exeter Hall, he said:

We sometimes hear people scoff at the idea of a psalm-singing general or psalm-singing soldiers; but there was a day in England when psalm-singing generals and soldiers showed that they were not to be despised. I will not say that there were not great faults in those men. I pronounce no opinion as to what they did politically; but this I will say, that their singing of psalms did not make them less terrible in the day of battle, and I believe everyone present feels that those who love Christ most may be expected to fear death least.

SETON CHURCHILL.

ART. V.—CURIOSITIES OF PARISH REGISTERS.

READERS of all classes will be obliged to Mr. Stanley Leighton for his admirable but too brief paper on our parochial registers, in the February number of *THE CHURCHMAN*. It was not less able than opportune, for indeed the subject is immediate and pressing. Mr. Borlase's Bill "To make