

level of a dull mediocrity, but many of the best and most active and earnest workers in the Master's vineyard occasionally feel the strain that the preparation weekly of two fresh, inspiring and effective sermons brings. Even were this the only part of the work that demanded their attention it would at times be both difficult and irksome, but when the demands on the minister's time and effort become so numerous as they now do, there are seasons when the stress is severe and the temptations to resort to makeshifts are great.

To meet these difficulties of a pastor's work this inventive age has supplied several devices, some of them of a very questionable character. There are several publications, excellent of their kind, that aim at giving the busy and overworked minister effective aid in the preparation of his sermons. Most of these magazines give several excellent sermons *in extenso*, with a view perhaps of supplying models worthy of imitation. These are followed by outlines of sermons of varying merit, which the preacher may adopt and fill out for his own use. From the extensive circulation to which the best of these publications have attained, it may be inferred that not a few ministers do not disdain to make use of them. Whether the use of these helps is at all times legitimate is an ethical question that preachers may be left to decide for themselves. There is a practice, however, followed by some which is wholly indefensible, that of a preacher stealing the sermons of another and giving them as if they were his own. The extent to which this is done it is impossible to know, but that it is done sometimes is made manifest by occasional detection. A writer in the *Nineteenth Century* states that "so-called religious papers and booksellers' catalogues teem with advertisements of ready-made discourses of every shade of orthodoxy, and at prices ranging from sixpence to a guinea, thirty shillings or even two guineas for the rarest vintages." It is clear from the abundance of the supply and the persistent manner in which these wares are advertised that the demand for them must be considerable. In connection with the sacred ministry this is a state of things far from creditable. It indicates a dulled conscience, suggests faithlessness and an obscured moral sense. It is difficult to conceive of a blessing on the preaching whose place of preparation is in Grub Street. In all this there is a painful suggestion of sham and insincerity. Can a blessing be looked for from Him who desireth truth in the inward parts on this pitiable and mercenary business? It is told that many years ago in Edinburgh there were two ministers of the same name whose letters were occasionally interchanged. One was a Churchman, the other a dissenter. The former was disposed to look on the latter as a usurper, and forwarded a misplaced letter with a laconic note in which it was stated "that if you did not arrogate to yourself a title to which you have no claim, this mistake would not have occurred." Time passed on. To the dissenter came a roll of lithographed sermons he had never ordered. They were for the brother who magnified his office, to whom they were forwarded with the formula altered to suit the occasion: "If you did not arrogate to yourself a function whose duties you are unable to fulfil, this mistake would not have occurred"—a severe sentence no doubt on the habit of preaching purchased sermons, but after all the only fitting one that belongs to a practice that brings those who resort to it into the contempt of all honest men.

PERSECUTION IN RUSSIA.

It takes a long time for some rulers, civil and ecclesiastical, to comprehend the meaning of the declaration put so clearly by the framers of the Westminster Confession, "God alone is Lord of Conscience." With inconceivable folly the Emperor Charles V. imagined that he could crush out the Protestant Reformation. It is told of him that when, after his abdication, he was an inmate of the Monastery of St. Just he had a fancy for collecting clocks which he placed on the walls of his apartments. It troubled him much because he could never make them all keep the same time. Some one asked him how he could expect to make minds think alike when he was unable to regulate a few time-pieces. Since his day many have attempted the impossible feat of securing national religious unity. In every instance it has been a manifest failure. Where the exercise of authority has been the most absolute, and persecution the most relentless, the measure of success has been far from complete. Apparent success and conspicuous failure alike have shown that God has not delegated to any mortal however exalted, be he prince or pope, the authority of con-

trolling the human conscience. Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes did not extirpate Protestantism from France, and the exile of its best and most industrious citizens was felt to be a distinct loss to the kingdom and a check to its industrial as well as to its moral and religious progress.

In our own time with all its belauded enlightenment, we see the same absurd and cruel policy pursued by the Czar of Russia. Those to whom is entrusted the government of the Russian people appear to have determined on securing the unification of the Muscovite Empire by the repression of civil and religious liberty. The spectre of Nihilism that stalks through the land has terrorized the ruling powers not without reason. Its menaces and threats are the evidence of discontent and desperation. That the Czar and his ministers are thoroughly alarmed is no cause for wonder. The danger that threatens is direct and avowed. It is natural that the rulers should take all proper precautions to ward off the danger with which they are constantly menaced, but those who understand and enjoy the priceless blessings of constitutional liberty may question the means employed for the preservation of the State, and cannot but feel the deepest sympathy for many of the victims of the inhuman exercise of arbitrary power. Unless Russian oppression results differently from the teaching of history the end will be very much unlike that intended by the Czar and his counsellors.

The motive for the religious persecutions maintained for the last few years does not lie so visibly on the surface, although it is apparent that the only attempt at its justification is that it is a means for securing the complete unification of the Russian nationality. For years the Lutherans of German origin resident in the Baltic Provinces have been subjected to the harshest and most arbitrary measures. They are treated ecclesiastically and civilly as an inferior race, and denied the free exercise of religious privilege, being hampered and restricted on every hand. Their educational institutions have been virtually suppressed, and all instruction must now be conducted in the Russian language. Outside remonstrance has in no way helped to mitigate the severity of the autocratic rigour with which the Lutherans in Russia have been treated.

The Stundists have of late years become very numerous in Southern Russia, where at the beginning of the present century, being exiles from Germany, they settled. Wilhelm, king of Wurtemberg, having the same idea that possesses Alexander III. of Russia, that all of his subjects should be of the same faith, expelled these simple and earnest Christians from his kingdom because they refused to conform to the national Church. They found an asylum in Russia, where, by the fervency of their devotion and the consistency and purity of their lives, they made a favourable impression on many of the Russians among whom they lived. Of late years large numbers joined them and they were wielding an influence for good that the dead orthodoxy of the Greek Church was powerless to effect. Under the inspiration, it is understood, of M. Pobedonostzeff, president of the Holy Synod, the decree has gone forth that it is a punishable crime for them to make converts or to teach their own children the faith to which they are so devotedly attached. The result of this cruel and arbitrary policy has been to send into Siberian exile a large number of the best and most upright citizens in the Russian Empire. Families are broken up, children have been torn from their parents' homes and committed to the training of priests in the tenets of the Greek Church.

The severity with which the Jewish inhabitants of Russia have been visited is familiar to all. They have been driven from their homes, and many of them have had to leave their possessions and go into exile for no other reason than that the imperial decree has gone forth that all the subjects of the Czar of Russia must belong to the Greek Church, a decree impossible of fulfilment. Persecution for conscience sake will prove a winnowing process. Those who for various reasons consider it politic to conform to the national religion can hardly prove sincere converts, and the pious Stundists and other dissenters who are prepared to suffer persecution for Christ's sake will retain their convictions, which will only become more precious to them because of the trials they have been called upon to endure. The Jew does not readily give up the faith of his fathers because of the harsh treatment of Gentile rulers. Russian bigotry and persecution may lead to results that will astonish those who in this age have resorted to the discarded weapons of a bygone time. How thankful we ought to be for the blessings of civil and religious freedom; may we become increasingly alive to the responsibilities they bring!

Books and Magazines.

THE enterprising publishers, S. W. Straub & Co., 243 State Street, Chicago, have favoured us with a beautiful new song, "O Father Keep Us," words by Maria Straub, music by S. W. Straub. This is an excellent sacred song, beautiful and not difficult.

A NEW and authorized Life of Mr. Spurgeon, entitled "From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit," including his last sickness, with portraits of Mr. Spurgeon, Family Portraits and sixty other illustrations, including Mr. Spurgeon's birth place, at Kelvedon, Essex—The Stockwell Orphanage—his home and study at Westwood, The Metropolitan Tabernacle, etc., will be published very shortly by A. C. Armstrong & Son, New York, simultaneously, by arrangement with Mr. Spurgeon's publishers, Passmore & Alabaster, of London.

SPECIAL journals, College, Trade, Society, etc., are becoming very much in vogue, and the number of them is steadily increasing. The latest on our table is the *Canadian Mute*, published at the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Belleville, Ont. It is an eight-paged paper of thirty-two columns, printed on excellent paper, and its typographical appearance is very creditable to the voiceless compositors, who, after only a few weeks' training, set up the greater part of the first number. We congratulate the superintendent on having added another useful industry to those already taught in the Institution, and the pupils on obtaining an admirable medium of communication with their friends throughout the country. The objects for which the paper has been started are commendable, and we trust it will meet with the fullest measure of success in the field it is intended to occupy.

THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT STUDENT. (Hartford, Conn.: The Student Publishing Co.)—The *Student* has commenced the practice of giving portraits and sketches of American Old Testament scholars. The subject selected for the February number is Prof. James Strong, LL.D., of Madison, N.J., of whom the sketch by Rev. J. W. Menlenhall, D.D. Professor Henry P. Smith, of Lane, writes on "The Evidence of Compilation." "The Religious Ideas of the First Book of Maccabees" is the theme on which Professor Frank C. Porter, of Yale, writes. Dr. Robert Francis Harper, London, England, treats of "The Discovery and Decipherment of the Cuneiform Inscriptions," and Professor F. B. Denio, of Bangor, Maine, discusses "The Book of Ecclesiastes." There are interesting and well-arranged studies on the founding of the Christian Church, as well as several other valuable features in this month's issue.

FOOTHOLDS FOR FAITH'S FEET. In Song and Story. (Toronto: William Briggs.)—This is the title of a dainty little volume on Hymns and Hymn-writers, by the Rev. W. H. W. Boyle, B.A., late pastor of Knox Church, St. Thomas. The popularity of the work is evidenced by the fact that though it has been on the market only a few weeks a second edition has been called for already. With true poetic taste the author analyzes six of the greatest hymns in our language, sets forth their doctrinal intent, and applies their practical teaching. Brief sketches are given of the lives of the writers of these hymns, the more stirring incidents in their experience are graphically portrayed, and mention is also made of the circumstances under which the hymns were composed. These illustrative lectures are at once so beautiful, so sympathetic and so practical that ordinary readers cannot fail to read them without interest and profit, and ministers will find them suggestive and stimulating.

BIBLE STUDIES. By Rev. J. L. Sooy, A.M. Illustrated with four coloured plates and sixty-four full-page half-tone engravings. (London, Ont.: McDermid & Logan).—Religious meditation is one of the obvious needs of our time. Its value in the cultivation and development of spiritual life is more generally recognized than acted upon. Whatever helps the contemplative side of Christian life should be highly prized. The present volume has been specially and carefully prepared to advance this object. It is comprehensive in its scope and includes family as well as personal religion. It is well arranged and presents studies for every day in the year, helps for the devotional hour, a closet promise with brief meditations, and a children's corner for every week in the year. The text of each Scripture study is given in full, and carefully-selected reflections are culled from a great number of the best writers in the English language. The work is neatly and clearly printed, and the pictorial embellishments are of great beauty, many of them being neat reproductions of Hoffman's famous pictures. The work needs no commendation; it commends itself.

THE SCOTCH-IRISH IN AMERICA. Proceedings and Addresses of the Third Congress at Louisville, Kentucky. (Nashville, Tenn.: Barbee & Smith).—It is an admitted fact that the sturdy Scotch-Irish settlers on this continent have taken a full share in doing its work and helping on its progress. In organizing for the purpose of preserving the records of their race, and cultivating the spirit of brotherly kindness among themselves, they are doing excellent work. The volume that records the proceedings of their third Congress is one of great interest. The first part, prefaced by a good portrait of Rev. John Hall, D.D., is devoted to a narrative of the proceedings of the assemblage at Louisville last May. Part second contains "The Scotch-Irish of the Bench and Bar," by Hon. A. E. Stevenson, of Bloomington, Ill.; "The Influence of the Scotch-Irish in the Formation of the Government of the United States," by Dr. J. H. Bryson, of Alabama; "The Scotch-Irish Among the Nations," by Dr. Thomas Murphy, of Philadelphia; "The Scotch-Irish of California," by Mr. Terence Masterson, of San Francisco, Cal.; "The Scotch-Irish of East Tennessee," by Judge O. P. Temple, of Knoxville, Tenn.; "Andrew Jackson," by Dr. D. C. Kelley, of Tennessee; "The Scotch-Irish of Kentucky," by Judge William Lindsay, of Frankfort, Ky.; "The Scotch-Irish of Canada," by Rev. Stuart Acheson, of Toronto; "Our Pledge to Posterity," by Dr. John S. MacIntosh, of Philadelphia; the sermon of Dr. John Hall at the great religious meeting at the Louisville Auditorium; together with many other valuable and interesting contributions. The appendix contains a biographical list of members of the Society, furnishing the only convenient means by which the genealogies and family relationships of the race can be traced.