

Highlands, three pages devoted to the British Mission to Morocco, a most pleasing and instructive picture entitled *A Sad Dog's Day*, *Sketches of Life On Board a Man-of-War*, *The Home of Florence Nightingale*, etc., etc. The supply of reading matter is also abundant and interesting, while the number complete costs at retail only 10 cents.

LITTELL'S *LIVING AGE* (Boston) comes with its weekly freight of wisely-selected articles, a perfect storehouse of literary gems.

THE *CENTURY* and *St. Nicholas* (New York) for October are full as ever of articles, grave, gay, instructive and amusing. The pictures of Negro life in the *Century* are inimitable.

THE *HOMILETIC MONTHLY* (Funk and Wagnalls) and the *Pulpit Treasury* (E. B. Treat), both worthy candidates for public favour, maintain their excellence without any diminution. Either would be missed.

INDIVIDUAL WORK THE MAIN THING.

Spurgeon is reported to have said that if the building of Noah's Ark had been left to a committee, the keel would not have been laid when the Deluge came on. Committees do sometimes work slowly, and, what is worse, sometimes they do not work at all. Just how long it would have taken a committee to build the Ark, it is impossible to say. Perhaps they never would have built it. Perhaps they would have wrangled about the shape of the vessel, or the size of the windows, or the places for the animals, until the Deluge began to come down. An Ark committee might have been a dismal failure, as many a committee has been since the days of Noah.

The fact is real work is always done by individuals. Committees may be useful for cutting out work, but in the end the work is done by individual men and women. Conferences, conventions and gatherings of that kind may throw some light on methods of working or may act as a mild tonic on workers who need toning up; but when the talk is over, and the resolutions are passed, the real work has to be done by individual exertion. Noah must go on and build the Ark himself, getting as much help as he may from Shem, Ham and Japheth.

When the Presbyterian Unions of '61 and '75 were being discussed, one would almost think that a union of all the Presbyterians of this Dominion would bring in the millennium. Listening to some of the union speeches, you would almost suppose that the moment the Churches were united all difficulties in doing the Lord's work would vanish into the air. It goes unsaid that Presbyterian Union is a good thing. Nobody doubts that now. But what practical difference does the Union make in carrying on the real work of the Church? Not very much. Preaching is the most important part of a minister's work. When a preacher sits down to make a sermon, does he find that the Union helps him to get at the exact meaning of the

"original," or to divide his text, or to properly distribute his matter, or find good illustrations that will make truth strike the mind of the most obtuse hearer, and stick there? Does he ever say to himself: "The Union of '61 greatly helped me in dividing that text, and the Union of '75 suggested an application that sent the truth right home?" The Union may work in that way for some preachers, but those we happen to know have to hammer their divisions and applications out of their own brains just as they did before the Union took place.

Next in importance to preaching is pastoral visitation. How much does the Union help one in pastoral work? The miles in the country are not any shorter, and the mud is just as sticky as it was when there were a half a dozen Presbyterian Churches in the Dominion. The sidewalks are just as hard and just as level as ever, and the tramp, tramp in the afternoons, making pastoral calls, make clerical feet as sore as in ante-Union days. The Union makes little or no difference in the actual work.

Elders, and managers and deacons and Sabbath school teachers and officers, in fact everybody, have to work now, if the work is done, just as everybody had to work before the Union, if the work was done. The universal law is that the work is done when individuals do it, and never done unless individuals do it.

Now, if all this is true in regard to a great movement like the Union, it must certainly be true in conferences, conventions and gatherings of that kind. These modern institutions may serve a good purpose, but it should never be forgotten that in the end the real work must be done by individuals. It is not the thunder that refreshes the earth and revives the growing grain. It is the individual rain-drops, each one doing its share. Thunder never made anything grow. Conference thunder, be it ever so loud, is as unproductive as any other kind, if individual men do not work well in their own individual spheres.

What the precise value of a conference or convention is it is impossible to estimate. When you attend a good one you may think that its value is considerable. The next time you hear some active conference or convention man preach, you probably change your mind. You wonder how it is that one who lectures others so much can't do better himself. Something may be gained by hearing men describe their methods of working. Still the gain in this direction is not great. There is no one best way of doing anything. The best method in one congregation may not be the best in another. The method best for one man may be the worst for another. Perhaps the real value of a Conference on the State of Religion depends almost entirely upon the stimulus it gives to those who attend. If it takes them out of a rut, brightens them up, refreshes them and sends them home nerved for the battle, and more determined