

GENERAL ASSEMBLIES IN TWO HEMISPHERES

I.—IMPRESSIONS OF AUSTRALIAN ASSEMBLIES

By Principal Mackay

Australia strikes a Canadian with a feeling of strangeness. Its towns and cities are for all the world like old world places, and while the accent of the cultured people is very pleasing, that of the man in the street is Cockney intensified. The trees are all strange varieties and nearly all shed their bark, giving the landscape a ragged and melancholy appearance at certain seasons; the flowers have no perfume and the birds no song; the notes of most of them being melancholy, even that of the crow suggesting tragic memories instead of the saucy good fellowship we associate with it. But one does not long feel strange, as no people in the world are more hospitable and kindly and Presbyterianism is the same the world over.

It was my good fortune to land in Sydney when the New South Wales Assembly was in the midst of its sessions, and it was immediately followed by the Victorian Assembly meeting in Melbourne. The Church of Australia was only organized a few years ago, and the various state gatherings which with us would be Synods, still retain the nature of assemblies and are much more important gatherings than our Synods.

Presbyterianism has played a part quite out of proportion to its numerical strength in the making of Australia. In educational and religious work it stands in the very front rank, and has gone into many forms of activity not entered by the Church in Canada.

The day of my arrival I was invited to an Assembly function in connection with the opening of a new cottage, the fourth in a group of cottages to make up the Burnside Homes for orphan children. From what I saw I should judge that this is a model institution and is doing a great christian work. Then the leading educational institutions for boys and girls are the Presbyterian Ladies' Colleges in Melbourne and in Sydney, and the Scots College for boys in Melbourne, while St. Andrew's College, Sydney, and Ormond College, Melbourne, easily rank with the best in theological institutions in these two centres. The governments of New South Wales and Victoria have adopted a most enlightened policy in dealing with religious influences in the state universities. They have assigned seven acres of land and pay pound for pound in the erection of buildings to any