

had the funds placed at the disposal of the Foreign Mission Committee. Mr. Macdonnell put the matter well when he showed that all Christian effort was in reality one, and that Christian people know their obligations to Home Mission work, only, many had not come to realize them as the claims of the heathen in foreign lands were now realized.

The annual public meeting in connection with the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society is unquestionably a power for a good, potent means for the advancement of the work. In numbers attending it, too, has shown a steady increase. The audience present this year filled one of the largest churches in Toronto, and no doubt the most capacious of the Hamilton churches will be taxed to accommodate those who desire to be present, when next year it meets in that city. Most people will say amen to the prayer reiterated by most of the speakers at the public meeting, "God bless the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society."

A CRITIC OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

IN the current issue of the quarterly *Presbyterian Review* there is a paper by Dr. Hutton, of New Jersey, on what he denominates the "American Sunday School." He apparently fancies that the Sunday school, as it exists in the United States, is essentially and characteristically different from the same institution in other lands. As his excellent paper discusses the strength and the weakness of the Sunday school, so this assumption of a distinctively American, that is, a United States, Sunday school, is a weak point in an otherwise well-timed and sensible estimate of the importance and present condition of one of the most valuable forms of Christian activity in connection with the modern Church. The difference between a Sunday school in an English and American city would no doubt be most noticeable in the matter of dialect and other minor peculiarities in which the two branches of the Anglo-Saxon race differ from each other. The United States visitor to a Canadian Sabbath school would find a wonderful resemblance in the appearance and methods to be seen in the schools on both sides of the international boundary. But then the average American has a vividly realizing sense of the relative superiority of all things American. It is just possible that in some cases it is neither more nor less than an amiable delusion.

That the importance of the Sunday school as a valuable religious educational agency has been realized by the people of the United States is cheerfully conceded. Dr. Hutton refers, in proof of this, to the fact that nearly the half of the children attending the Sunday schools of the world are to be found in the United States. This much also may be freely conceded. In the United States the Churches have fully recognized the value of the religious training of the young by its means with a cordiality that has sometimes been wanting in other countries. The clear and well-defined relations of Church and State in the neighbouring Republic have, to a large extent, freed the American mind from the contentions and complexities that have beset the question in older lands where the relics of feudalism and the arrogance of dominant State Churches have repressed the elastic activities of the Christian Church. The national educational system in the United States has been, and will continue to be, free from clerical interference, from the ecclesiastics of any Church. They have wisely kept clear of recognizing sectarian schools of any kind, and now that Roman Catholic dignitaries are officiously intermeddling there, as they do everywhere else, with national education, they are beginning to find out that they need neither expect the establishment of separate schools nor a controlling influence in the public schools of the States. In these circumstances, therefore, the religious education of the young becomes an imperative duty, and imposes an obligation on the Church which she dare not neglect. It is thus no wonder that the Sabbath school has become an institution of vast importance and of such acknowledged efficiency as it has in the United States. Yet the methods in operation there are to be found in all English-speaking countries, establishing the fact that there is a wonderful degree of catholicity attained by the Sabbath school movement.

In the opinion of Dr. Hutton the catechetical form of instruction is more generally adopted in United States schools than in those of any other land. Of course it needs a wide experience to be able to reach a complete and accurate generalization. It may be that Dr. Hutton is in a position to speak with entire accuracy as well as with authority, but Canadian teachers are tolerably familiar with what he calls the Socratic method. At all events many who have

grown old in the service can distinctly remember how departures from the time-honoured custom of teaching by questions were stigmatized as the adoption of "the lecture system." The catechetical mode is certainly most valuable both for teacher and scholar. If questioning elicits the extent and accuracy of a pupil's knowledge, it also renders a teacher's preparation more or less imperative. It might easily be extended a little further, and the scholars encouraged at a specified time during the school hour of asking for explanations of what they do not understand, or of difficulties they may meet with in their study of the lesson. If any apprehend that an extension of such liberty to the children is certain to be abused, they may be assured that anyone with true teaching aptitude will be able effectively to prevent its abuse and make it a most valuable means of instruction.

Dr. Hutton points out that the failure of the Sunday school to impart systematic instruction in Bible truth is one of the weaknesses of the institution. In proof of this he appeals to the remarkable degree of any thing like correct Bible knowledge which people who have had the advantage of Sunday school training occasionally exhibit. There are indications that this weakness is in process of removal. The labours of the committee who prepare the International Lesson series have endeavoured thus far at least to overtake as far as possible a systematic study of certain portions of the Scripture, and to direct special attention to all the essential truths of evangelical Christianity. It is nevertheless well that the defect should be pointed out, and when once it is clearly perceived, the sanctified intelligence devoted to the best interests of the Sabbath school will endeavour to find a remedy. The next weakness specified is the lack of grading the pupils in Sunday school. The necessity of classification is apparent, and has been applied with most satisfactory results in common schools; its adoption in the Sunday school is merely a question of time. Connected with this is the training and qualification of teachers. This also is receiving something like the attention that the necessities of the case require. Then also the question of the age of teachers is considered, the pros and cons are candidly stated and the almost universal employment of youthful instructors is rated amongst the weaknesses of the existing system.

The tendency to exalt the Sabbath school to a position of independence, or of superiority to the Church, is among the weaknesses Dr. Hutton feels called upon to record. In Canada, this overweening estimate of the place and power of the Sabbath school is not by any means prevalent, though it may be occasionally met with. Those who do make the claim forget the proportion of means and the real unity of all Christian effort. The Sabbath school is an important means of cultivating the devotional nature of the pupils, but the character of some of the prayers offered and some of the hymns and music used, are by no means best suited for this high and holy purpose. The paper concludes with a number of excellent remarks on the character of Sabbath school literature. That its current quality meets with the unqualified approbation of Dr. Hutton, or for that matter of intelligent, common sense Christian people is what could hardly be expected. He discerns the need for a fuller consecration of sanctified intellect to the task of providing healthy, instructive and elevating reading matter for Sabbath school pupils. There is, no doubt, visible improvement in this department in recent years, but there is still room and urgent need for much more. Dr. Hutton is a friendly critic of the Sabbath school, and the earnest, outspoken critic whose aim for the removal of weaknesses from our most cherished institutions is not properly to be regarded as their enemy, but is to be reckoned in the number of their best friends.

NOT A TEMPORARY EXCITEMENT.

BY some the impression is entertained that the feeling aroused in opposition to the incorporation and endowment of the Jesuit Order in Quebec is an evanescent impulse which will speedily subside. In a certain measure it is true that popular opinion is at times impulsive. Like the wind it may blow strongly in one direction for a time, and gradually veer round till it sweeps in force from the opposite point of the compass. This variation in public opinion on Romish aggression is what some are beginning to predict. The results of past experience, to a certain extent afford a colourable pretext for entertaining doubts as to the firmness of attitude at present assumed by those who profess to be the friends of civil and religious liberty. Yet there is behind this movement a degree of conviction and a resolute determination to resist the insidious and stealthy infringements on the freedom of Canadian

citizens which the instruments of the Papacy are ever ready to make. Were the matter one used merely as a shuttlecock by political rivals it might readily be supposed to be a momentary and simulated indignation for electioneering effects, but others beside the gentlemen who deal in practical politics are taking a deep and earnest interest in promoting the movement for disavowal of the Jesuit Estates Act. Principal Caven for instance is not a politician. He is one not easily moved by the cross-currents in the atmosphere of political contention. Moreover he takes a calm, dispassionate and conscientious view of a question before he declares his position in relation to it. Thus in discussing the legislation affecting the Jesuits he stands on the firm ground of clear and well-defined principles. He says nothing to excite religious rancour; he makes no inflammatory appeals to bigotry and passion; he voices the deep convictions of a large number of solid and thoughtful people throughout Ontario who do not parade their feelings, but who can even after a wave of excitement has subsided, be depended upon at the proper time to say what they mean, and to mean what they say. Hence also the well-expressed resolution passed by Presbyterian women last week, and the resolutions of the Synod of Hamilton and London, both of which appear elsewhere in this issue. The other Synods and the General Assembly will doubtless speak the same words and mean the same thing. Besides, the other evangelical churches are putting themselves on record in a manner not open to doubt that those who look for the early and final disappearance of protests against Romish aggression in Canada will have reason to distrust their forecasting of the future.

Books and Magazines.

HOW WE ARE SAVED. By Rev. James A. R. Dickson, B.D. (London: Religious Tract Society.)—The indefatigable and devoted pastor of Central Church, Galt, by this little volume, will doubtless be the means of helping many inquirers. It is clearly, concisely and plainly written. There is nothing in it to bewilder or perplex those seeking an answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" The truths taught are thoroughly scriptural. Its wide circulation will doubtless prove a spiritual boon to many.

POEMS BY DORA GREENWELL. Selected with a biographical introduction by William Darling (London: Walter Scott; Toronto: W. J. Gage & Co.)—Dora Greenwell's poems possess many attractive qualities. They are pure, clear and beautiful. The spirit they breathe and the emotions to which they appeal exercise an elevating and a refining effect. The selection here presented in this recent issue of the *Canterbury Poets Series* is made with excellent taste and judgment. The biographical introduction is reasonably short, admirably written, and full of just the kind of information a reader of Dora Greenwell's poems would like to possess.

GOETHE'S FAUST. With some of the Minor Poems edited by Elizabeth Craigmyle. (London: Walter Scott; Toronto: W. J. Gage & Co.)—This neat little volume, another of the *Canterbury Poets Series* opens with a well written biographical account of Goethe's literary labours and a just and comprehensive estimate of one who occupied so high a place in the intellectual and literary life of his country, and in every country where genius is appreciated. The translation of Faust is Bayard Taylor's, one of the best that has yet appeared. Only a few of Goethe's minor poems appear, but those given are well selected and give an idea of the various moods of the great poet. A number of interesting notes are appended.

BLACK BEAUTY. The Autobiography of a Horse. By A. Sewell. (Toronto: Williamson & Co.)—Mankind are very wise no doubt, but they have not a monopoly of wisdom. We know comparatively little about our fellow-citizens on this earth, who though they walk prone and do not raise their heads to the stars, nevertheless have their own proper share of intelligence which the Almighty Maker has conferred on them. In the equine as well as in the human world there are great diversities of intelligence. In this most fascinating little work we have a specimen of a very superior literary horse. True he did not pen his biography with his own forefoot but he managed as many in these days manage to do, to find in the gifted author a most competent and sympathetic amanuensis. In England this work has had a remarkable popularity which it fully deserves. It has the recommendation of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The lessons it teaches are of the best. Young people will find it a charming and instructive book.