

the United States. is more irenic in its aim than the others. Its acceptance was urged in view of the prospective conferences on Christian re-union, that that movement might be aided if the apparent asperities of Calvinism were smoothed down a little confessionally. Churchman and Methodist have in the past said hard things about the distinctive doctrines upheld by a historic Presbyterianism and their friendlier feelings might be evoked by a free, unsolicited, and more than timely, surrender of what has hitherto been distinctive in the Presbyterian system. Has the proper time arrived, and has the proper occasion presented itself for the Canadian Church to undertake the very responsible and arduous work of revising the time-honoured standards accepted by Presbyterianism all over the world? Is she called upon, of her own motion to lower the blue banner out of deference to the prepossessions of good brethren of other communions with whom we might have closer and more real fraternity without making gratuitous concessions?

This is a matter in which all sections of the Church might well hasten slowly. Creed revision will come—is bound to come, but let it not be entered on with a light heart. So much depends upon it, so serious are the responsibilities. Might it not be taken up by the Presbyterian Alliance in concert with the respective Churches represented by that body, and might not a formula be ultimately agreed upon that would secure the assent of the entire Presbyterian family? Union with other communions at the expense of divergencies within the ranks of Presbyterianism itself might be too dearly bought.

### GUARD HOME LIFE.

**P**ESSIMISM, from the nature of things, is not popular and never can be. Like the lugubrious comforter who comes to visit the sick and the distressed, like the corpse at an ancient Egyptian feast, the pessimist who can only see the dark side of things casts a gloom wherever he goes. There is, however, a dark side to all things earthly and he is not necessarily a pessimist, who does not persistently close his eyes to all the facts attainable in forming his judgments. One-sided optimism is just as sure to err as is its correlate, and from all errors spring evil consequences. Home life and happy home relationships cannot be too highly prized. All proper efforts ought to be made to ensure their permanence and extension. Whatever unduly infringes on the home life is necessarily injurious to it. Excessive devotion to money-making, undue desire for social pleasures weaken home ties and such weakening of the integrity of home is undoubtedly a bad influence. There is a cause that is doing much in these days to utterly destroy the sanctity of home, and make of it one of the most deplorable wrecks under the sun. The laxity of the marriage tie, stimulated by the facility with which in modern life divorce in many lands can be so easily obtained cannot be regarded as a cheering sign of the times. In the New Testament, where the best of all moral codes is to be found, our Saviour lays down one cause and one only for the annulling of marital relationships. The reason given for this which operated then and which operates now is hardness of heart. Ecclesiastics and legislators have sought to improve upon this, and as might be expected the improvements have turned out to be egregious failures. The so-called infallible Church in its attempts to be wise above what is written has made a sorry mess of it in this respect as well as in most other instances where it has substituted the traditions of men for the commandments of God.

The Head of the Church instituted two sacraments but His self-styled and self-appointed Vicar on earth was not content with this and he sought to improve upon it and added other five, among them the sacrament of matrimony. Placing the efficacious value the Romanist Church does on the sacraments, it was found that the dissolution of the marriage tie was incompatible with their ideas of sacramental inviolability and as something had to give way divorce was declared to be inadmissible. Hence wherever Roman Catholicism is sufficiently powerful it strenuously opposes all and every divorce law. But if in the opinion of the Roman Catholic Church the absolute inviolability of the marriage relation is the law it certainly in practice has numerous and various exceptions. There is a safety valve by which undue pressure can always be lessened. Whenever in the estimation of the Romish rulers it is deemed expedient or necessary the Pope can grant a dispensation by which all difficulties can be overcome and all apparent inconsistencies reconciled.

In recoil from the inflexibilities of the papal canon law free peoples have in too many instances rushed to the opposite extreme and treated the most

sacred of human relationships purely in the light of a civil contract. Marriage is God's institution and His law should govern it. That law is disregarded whenever it is annulled for other causes than the one clearly specified in the sacred Scriptures. In some continental countries, notably Germany and Switzerland, lax divorce laws are in force. The Germans are a home-loving people and for this reason divorce is not quite so frequent as it would otherwise be. Perhaps nowhere are there greater anomalies in divorce laws than in the United States. Each State regulates its own laws in this respect, and as a consequence great diversity exists. In some States the laws are strict, in others the severance of the marriage tie may be almost had for the asking. In effect, however, the strictness of the law affords no adequate security, as parties tired of each other can by a temporary domicile in a State where divorce can be easily obtained, readily secure the freedom the laws of their own State deny them. Again, so lax are the divorce laws in several States, especially in the west, that a wife resident in New York State may for some time be ignorant of the fact that her husband has secured in an Illinois court the decree that annuls their former relations. True this can only be done by fraud, but it has been done over and over again, and besides being a fraud it is a grievous and gross injustice. It is not surprising, then, that in the neighbouring republic the people are beginning to agitate in favour of better divorce laws and the reform of the abuses to which the existing state of things inevitably gives rise. However strong and prosperous a nation may be if it continues to regard with indifference evils that menace the very existence of family life its stability is seriously imperilled. It is suggested very properly that the divorce laws throughout the Union should be made uniform. That certainly would be a great improvement on what now prevails, and it is certain that from past experience our neighbours will decidedly prefer greater restraints to more laxity in the granting of divorces in the future. Careful inquiries are being instituted and all available information is being collected with a view to place before the people the startling results of a system that is in many instances working most injuriously to their best interests. Mr. Carroll F. Wright, an eminent economist, is devoting his attention to the subject, and from advance reports already published many interesting facts may be gleaned. Here is a sample:

In divorce this country stands pre-eminent. Mr. Wright has not been able to obtain full information from foreign countries for the two decades covered by his report; but he has collected enough to indicate that there is no other land in the world that is so hospitable as ours to the dissolution of the marriage tie. In fact, more divorces are granted in the United States in one year than in all Europe. Take the last year of Mr. Wright's second decade for example. In 1886 our courts released 25,535 couples from their marital obligations; the courts of Great Britain and the Continent released only 22,080. The records of other years would not add materially to the reputation of the United States.

The European countries that showed the slightest tendency to follow our illustrious example in 1886 were, France, with 6,211, and the German Empire, with 6,078. But of the number belonging to the German Empire 3,308 must be credited to Prussia alone. Illinois, with 2,600; Indiana, with 1,655; Iowa, with 1,127; and Kansas, with 817, lack only seven of equality with France. Ohio, with 1,889; Texas, with 1,326; Pennsylvania, with 1,156; New York, with 1,006, and Wisconsin, with 700, come within one of equality with Germany. Although one of the smallest of the European nations, Switzerland is among the first as a manufacturer of divorces. During the year in question her courts granted 899, but this number is only ninety eight more than Tennessee. Then comes Austria, with 763, only three more than Kentucky; Great Britain, 475, only twenty-four more than Colorado; Italy, 418, only two more than Connecticut; and Belgium, 354, only twenty-nine more than Georgia. All the other European countries are below the 300 limit. The best records are those of Scotland (ninety-six), Finland (sixty-two) and Ireland, seven.

As in Canada the power of granting divorces is vested exclusively in the Senate, the number granted is surprisingly few. This is accounted for by the fact that the process is somewhat expensive. Not a few ill-assorted couples, however, take advantage of the hospitality of our neighbours, and seek in their courts the release which the strict Canadian law denies them. No divorce law can work satisfactorily and safeguard the family that contravenes the plain teaching of Scripture.

### Books and Magazines.

**PARADISE REGAINED.** The Poetical Works of John Milton. Edited by John Bradshaw, M.A., LL.D. Inspector of Schools, Madras. (London: Walter Scott; Toronto: W. J. Gage & Co.)—The Canterbury Poets series, of which this volume is one, has decided merits. The standard works, carefully edited by competent men, of the great English poets, are reproduced in neat and convenient form,

and at a most reasonable rate. The present volume contains "Paradise Regained," and the minor poems of John Milton.

**THE ENGLISH POETS:** Lessing, Rousseau: Essays by James Russell Lowell, with "An Apology for a Preface." (London: Walter Scott; Toronto: W. J. Gage & Co.)—Perhaps no living essayist is more generally appreciated than is James Russell Lowell, whose "Biglow Papers" ushered him into fame many years ago. His essays published in this volume of the Camelot series are most interestingly and tastefully written, evidencing that he is thoroughly appreciative of all that is best and purest in English poetic literature.

**ESSAYS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT:** Selected and Edited, with Introduction and Notes. By Frank Carr. (London: Walter Scott; Toronto: W. J. Gage & Co.)—Young readers of the present day who desire to have a general acquaintance with English literature, cannot afford to overlook the claims on their attention of a writer of such eminence as William Hazlitt. During his lifetime, his writings were highly prized, and as an evidence of the value still set upon them, it has been thought expedient to give them a place in the Camelot series.

**LIFE OF FRIEDRICH SCHILLER.** By Henry W. Nevins. (London: Walter Scott; Toronto: W. J. Gage & Co.)—In the Great Writers Series, issued by the enterprising publishers here named, an excellent biography of one of the great Weimar literary lights is given. Friedrich Schiller has not only a high place assigned him in his native country, but his works are welcomed wherever literature is cultivated and appreciated. The story of his life and literary activity is admirably told by Mr. Nevins, in this compact little volume.

**SAMUEL AND SAUL:** Their Lives and Times. By Rev. William J. Deane, M.A., Rector of Ashen, Essex. (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Co.)—The enterprising publisher is issuing simultaneously with an English house an admirable series of handy and compact volumes in "Men of the Bible." This is another volume of that excellent series. Much varied and careful research has been exercised in its preparation, and the book will be found very useful to all who endeavour to have a definite and accurate knowledge of Holy Scripture.

**ISAIAH: HIS LIFE AND TIMES,** And the Writings that bear His Name. By Rev. S. R. Driver, D.D., Regius Professor of Hebrew, and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford. (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Co.) This is not a large work, but it is the result of very scholarly and diligent labour. It is historical and critical, casting much light on the structure and meaning of the prophecies of Isaiah. It will be read with much interest and profit by the thoughtful Christian, though he may decline to accept some of the conclusions reached by the learned Oxford Hebrew professor.

**THE ENGLISH ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE.** (New York: Macmillan & Co.) The April number presents as a frontispiece an engraving of Feyen Perrin's picture, "A Reverie," and Algernon Charles Swinburne contributes a poem "A Jacobite's Exile." The descriptive illustrated papers are: "On Two Shores," "A Suburban Garden," and Fielding's song "A Hunting we will go," with quaint illustrations by Hugh Thompson. Archibald Forbes tells us in his own forceful way, "How 'The Crayture' got on the Strength." F. Marion Crawford's serial is continued, and a new one "The Better Man," by Arthur Paterson, is begun.

**THE PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.** (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, Toronto: James Bain & Son.) Though published in New York this able quarterly is in reality of international interest. In the list of associate editors the names of Professors Flint, Calderwood, W. G. Blaikie, Withrow, Caven, and Dr. J. Munro Gibson, appear. The issue for the current quarter is to the thoughtful reader very attractive. Among the subjects treated are, "The American Sunday School," by the Rev. Manicus H. Hutton, D.D., "The Theology of Ritschl," by Rev. George Galloway, D.D., "The Differences between the Oratorical and the Rhetorical Styles," by Prof. Thomas S. Hastings, D.D., "Concessions to Science," by Professor George Macloskie, LL.D., "Romanism as a Factor in Canadian Politics," by Rev. T. F. Fotheringham; "The Egyptian Nile as a Civilizer," by Prof. Lansing, D.D.; "Cousilæ Evangelica," by Rev. Talbot W. Chambers, D.D., LL.D.; "Woman's Position and Work in the Church," by Rev. Samuel T. Nichols, D.D., LL.D. Then the number contains critical notices of all the recent works of any importance in theological and general literature.