

on the ordinances of the Church be imposed. Support of the Church by the State has deadened the Christian conscience so far as the matter of giving is concerned, and it takes time for adjustment to simpler and more evangelical methods of contribution for religious purposes. The educative process is advancing. Various influences more or less worthy are at work for its extension. The severance of the bond that bound Church and State together has thrown the Churches on their own resources. It has been found that this is a great advantage to the religious bodies themselves, since it has been the means of enabling them to adopt a more excellent way in the support of Christian ordinances.

Another educative force has been the self-denial and endurance which the larger portion of the Christian ministry has exemplified. Many worthy labourers have been very inadequately supported, yet they have gone on uncomplainingly looking for a higher reward than any mere compensation money can afford. The difficulties that beset the working of the Augmentation Scheme, confessedly necessary as it is, and its claims presented with unflinching energy and earnestness by Rev. D. J. Macdonnell and other disinterested men show that education in the principle of Christian giving is only imperfectly understood. At all events in the carrying out of the scheme there is considerable divergence between profession and practice.

Yet another appreciable influence in stimulating liberality is found in the appeals to the emulative capacity of human nature. Mr. Smith annually contributes so much to the congregational funds. The fact is duly chronicled in the financial records, and in due course finds its way into the annual printed report. Mr. Jones, in spite of himself, though firmly convinced that giving for religious purposes is a matter of duty and personal responsibility, is more influenced by what he sees in the printed report than he cares to admit. This method of appeal to average human nature is supposed to be a carrying out of the Scriptural practice of provoking one another to love and good works, and in harmony with strict and careful business methods.

A hopeful educative agency to promote Christian giving is that of systematic beneficence. This is one of the latest features of our Church work. It is no longer left to sporadic effort, but has a recognized place among the instrumentalities to be employed for the advancement of practical religion. There is a standing committee which annually reports to the General Assembly and occasionally issues addresses to the membership of the Church in which the duty is clearly explained and enforced. One of the leading spirits in connection with this movement is Principal Caven who in due season pleads earnestly and eloquently for the exercise of this one of the best evidences of the power of a living personal Christianity. The Church cannot attain to the full measure of her power until rich and poor, young and old, give as the Lord hath prospered them ungrudgingly and in the spirit of a true consecration for Christ's sake and from love to Him.

TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCHES.

COUNTRY churches pursue their work under conditions somewhat different from those in towns and cities. They have not the same facilities for organization, and they have difficulties of their own to contend with. The minister has his full measure of responsibility, and often has to do single handed what in better organized charges is done by others. In the country churches there is not, and under the circumstances cannot well be, the same division of church work that is found to exist in town and city congregations. While conceding that there is a degree of slowness in moving, a preference for old ways in many country congregations, much might be done by vigilant and prudent energy in pushing the work of organization. There is, it is true, neither sufficient range nor the same facility for diversified congregational agencies, yet with resolute purpose and skilful action there is no denying that efficient societies for carrying on congregational work might flourish far more extensively than they do at present.

In town and city there is a cry that organization is overdone. The complaint is not altogether without foundation. Yet even in larger centres this need not be. There is room for a more complete adaptation in the employment of Christian activity. It happens occasionally that in a large congregation many of the people who are styled workers do not husband their strength or exercise a great amount of discrimination. They belong to three or four or even more congregational societies, not to mention

those of a more general character. They expend their energies in a ceaseless activity. It is a question whether they might not be able to do more effective and better work if their time was not so crowded and their energies more concentrated. It is both the privilege and duty of the congregation to foster and develop the latent talent and power of service of each individual member, finding out the particular form of Christian activity for which each is best fitted. As it is there are many in every congregation both in town and country whose attitude is one of passive receptivity. They are contented to browse ruminatingly on the field of ordinances. It never occurs to them that they might take a share of the active Christian work which lies near to the hand of every one. True, all have not the same gifts, but in this is the Church's strength. Each in his place doing what he is most capable of doing will bring out the Church's power for practical good-doing in a manner that has never yet been fully realized.

Even in large centres a proper distribution and general apportionment of congregational work would remove the objection that has been urged, not without reason, that we are being organized to death. In the city the complaint is that we have too much organization; in the country too little. It is a narrow and conventional view that exalts the city churches at the expense of those in the country. Many advantages are on the side of city charges. They have numbers and wealth; they are surrounded by spheres that offer unlimited scope for practical Christian work. They are in general able to secure the best available ministerial talent. The material for the selection of the fittest office-bearers is abundant. Some of the difficulties that country churches have to contend with do not exist. The tendency of population is townward. Energies are taxed to provide necessary accommodation for the steadily augmenting city populations. There are many country places and small towns where there is perceptible a steady diminution of inhabitants. The more energetic and enterprising settlers, finding the outlook too circumscribed, move away to the busy centres, and thus the town and city congregations are benefitted by the influx of those who have been trained under faithful country pastorates. But their pews in the country churches are left empty. The people that replace the farmers who leave may belong to other communions. The young people, finding no suitable outlet for their energies, hive off as opportunities offer, and just when they might be useful in the Christian work in the community to which by birth they belong and in the congregation to which they owe their religious impressions and training they move away and leave the ranks diminished.

People generally judge by visible results. A congregation placed in exceptionally favourable circumstances may be able to tabulate large annual accessions to its membership. Things generally are prosperous. It gets full credit for its progressiveness, and no fair-minded person will do other than rejoice and desire its continued success. No less but possibly more credit and encouragement are due to the Church that stands as a beacon light in the midst of a stagnant or decaying community. The congregation that faithfully and resolutely maintains with undiminished zeal its steady work amidst discouragements is worthy of much more credit than usually falls to its share. The minister who remains at his post with its attendant depressions, and works on steadily and conscientiously under a deep sense of accountability to the King and Head of the Church has the making in him of a spiritual hero. It is the custom too much to judge of men by the outward visible success of their work, and to overlook those who no less worthily occupy the fields that do not obtrude themselves on the public gaze. Those whose eyes are undazzled by superficial appearances will accord to the brethren who labour so efficiently in the country charges a higher meed of esteem than is customarily extended them.

In town and country the animating spirit of Christian work is the same. Location does not add to or diminish the value of the immortal soul. Its salvation is the object of all Christian effort, and the advancement of the divine life, the edification of the body of Christ whether in city or rural resting places, is a work worthy of the highest attainments and most devoted consecration. In view of the magnitude and importance of the work solemnly entrusted to the minister of Christ temporary distinctions fade out. The final award will be to the fidelity with which Christ and Him crucified has been preached, not in town or country, but throughout the world. Christ's commission is world-wide.

Books and Magazines.

THE NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE. (Boston: New England Magazine Corporation.)—The September number of this magazine is of special interest to Canadian readers. In addition to valuable papers on general and economic subjects, there are two interesting contributions by Canadian writers of acknowledged merit. Dr. George Stewart writes on "Literature in French Canada," and W. Blackburn Harie discusses "Some Canadian Writers of To-day." This last paper is finely illustrated with portraits of a number of our best known and most esteemed Canadian authors. W. Wilfred Campbell and Archibald Lampman contribute poems to the current number.

PLYMOUTHISM WRIGHED IN THE BALANCES. By Rev. John Nichols, pastor of St. Mark's Church, Montreal. (Montreal: W. Drysdale & Co.)—This trenchant exposure of the assumptions and defects of Plymouthism was originally prepared, the author tells us, with no intention of publication, but as a paper to be read before the Protestant Ministerial Association of Montreal. His ministerial brethren and other friends thought so well of it that they advised its publication in the present form. Within brief compass Mr. Nichols has been successful in dealing with the leading points, and some of the tactics of the Plymouth Brethren. Its general circulation will be useful.

THE JOHN V. HUBER CO. OF PHILADELPHIA have forwarded advance sheets of what promises to be a most excellent and valuable work. Its title is "The Prince of Peace," by Mrs. Isabella M. Alden, so widely and favourably known by her pen-name of "Pansy." This admirable writer in this, her latest work, does for young readers what such men as Farrar, Geikie, Andrews, Edersheim and others have done for the adult readers of the time. She narrates the life of Jesus in the ordinary language of our time. Judging from these advanced sheets, she has lovingly and conscientiously performed the task assigned her, and the work when given to the public will be certain to meet with a cordial reception, and it will no less certainly wield a powerful influence for good. The work will be copiously illustrated with engravings finely designed and carefully executed.

THE TREASURY FOR PASTOR AND PEOPLE. (New York: E. B. Treat.)—The September number of this evangelical monthly is pre-eminently rich in several departments. Every preacher and worker for Christ will find here a rich feast, mental stimulus and practical hints. The portrait of Dr. A. T. Wolff, favourably known in Toronto, forms the frontispiece, and his sermon on "David Forgiveness" will be a source of great comfort to many. A splendid sermon by Dr. R. S. Storrs comes next in order, followed by two others of great power—one by Dr. Meyer and the other by Dr. Hart. The article by President Graham on the Living Issue—"the Bible as a Text-book in Theological Seminaries," has the true ring. The leading articles on "Will He Draw the Young?" "I Believe in the Holy Ghost," and "The One Theme," are full of well considered ideas, and "An Eastern City," by Rev. J. G. Kitchin, throws a flood of light upon many texts of Scripture. The *Prayer Meeting Topics* are very suggestive; "The Heavenly Register," by Dr. T. L. Cuyler, is replete with comforting and testing truth. Dr. G. R. Van De Water gives excellent advice to men in their homes, and Dr. J. Thompson notes several special points in Homiletics that should be of great service to sermonizers. All the departments are well sustained.

FOUR years ago, says the *Christian World*, when Mr. Greenwood published his first edition of "Public Libraries," only 133 places had adopted the Public Libraries Acts. Now he tells us, in his third edition (Simpkin & Co.), a total of 208 adoptions of the Acts has been reached. Seventy-five adoptions of the Acts in four years against 133 for thirty-six years, may, Mr. Greenwood thinks, be considered a very satisfactory record. It indicates that we have reached a rung of the ladder in our national life when these institutions are fast beginning to be looked upon as an inseparable corollary of the Board Schools, and that no district can be complete until it has a building inscribed as a Public Library. Taking as a criterion the number of public libraries in other countries, the comparison is, however, woefully against us. In Austria there are no fewer than 557; France possesses 500; Italy, 493; Germany, 398; Great Britain, 208; Russia, 145; Bavaria, 169. If some districts the proportionate issue to each inhabitant reaches over four books per year of the entire population of the town and to each actual borrower over twenty volumes per year. But while one town requires four books per head for its population, other towns are satisfied with less than one. Taking the average of the towns through where there are public libraries, it is about one book and a-half to each person in the area they cover. The reading is done: Seventeen per cent. by the independent and professional classes, forty-four per cent. by tradesmen, students, shop assistants and clerks, and thirty-nine per cent. by mechanics and labourers. Bad trade will at once affect the returns, and good trade leaves less time for reading. Wet weather sends people to the libraries, and a series of lectures on special subjects will lessen the returns. Around the head of the issues of fiction the storm of criticism has raged with the greatest fury. As everybody, however, reads some works of fiction at some time or other, the question will probably settle itself if a wise selection of books is exercised. Among the working classes especially, if they are to live healthily and naturally, there must be a counterpoise to the monotony of mere mechanical employment, and if their imagination can be quickened by fiction that is elevating and educational in character, and a passion for reading created, it will not remain satisfied with works of fiction only. This is proved by the fact that the proportion of solid literature is steadily on the increase and the issue of fiction in many libraries steadily declining. Looking at the vast libraries in which some great English families keep under lock and key many rare editions of famous books worth their weight in gold, the reflection to Mr. Greenwood is inevitable, that, valuable as these collections are, they are not put to the best use. Bound faultlessly and shut up in elaborately carved oak book-cases that are seldom opened, inaccessible save to a few, and on occasions of great rarity, they become little more than expensive articles of furniture, whereas if these treasures were placed upon the gaping shelves of public libraries, they would live forever, and no one could estimate when, along the line of the generations to follow, they would cease to gratify and enlighten.