

say morbid, interest that the case has excited throughout. The trial was conducted with great ability and with the utmost fairness. Its result was eagerly looked for, and when it was ascertained that the death penalty had been pronounced steps were at once taken to secure if possible a commutation of the sentence. All this tended to keep alive a certain degree of interest in the fate of Reginald Birchall. It may be added that what is known as journalistic enterprise also helped to whet the appetite of the public. The murderer of F. C. Benwell has obtained a degree of notoriety that has hitherto at least been exceptional.

It is melancholy beyond expression to think of a young man who under favourable circumstances began what might have been an honourable and useful career coming at the early age of twenty-four to an end so painfully tragic. There is nothing strikingly novel in the eternal truths which by lurid contrast the gallows in Woodstock gaol-yard so sternly emphasizes. It was unfortunate for the boy when his father died that he was deprived of home with its good influences, safeguards and restraints. At that critical period in a lad's life when he reaches the parting of the ways, it is of the utmost moment that he choose aright. If he is to make of his life the best it is possible of becoming, then he must will to do the right and shun evil. It will not do to be passive. Instinctively too many choose the wrong turn where the pathways to good and evil separate. A lazy indifference is almost certain to lead on to the downward way. It was so in Birchall's case. From that time onward he went from bad to worse. Once more his tragic fate gives emphasis to the danger of evil companionship. The jovial, good-natured, careless, impulsive boy will always find the admiration and encouragement that is highly injurious. When in his twentieth year he went as a nominal student to Oxford, he naturally took to the reckless set whose chief object is revelry and roystering. He was evidently oblivious of any high purpose in life, and he plunged into wild and reprehensible extravagance, which, had he possessed the means, was in itself utterly foolish. Not having the money to spend on the follies in which he delighted his course was simply criminal. The one golden opportunity of his life, that of availing himself of the advantages that study at Oxford would afford, was insanely thrown away. His wild career at that venerable seat of learning was cut short by ignominious expulsion. From that time onward his course was that of a characterless, adventurous trickster.

The sacredness of truth in itself essentially right and indispensable to upright character was wholly wanting in Birchall. Lying was to him a pastime in which he gloried. The habit remained with him, and when he realized the consequences of the crime for which he suffered, he endeavoured, with a degree of clumsiness unlooked for in the case of an expert, to evade condemnation by a series of falsehoods that only revealed the desperation to which he was reduced. He was not hanged for lying, but if he had had that horror of falsehood that belongs to a manly nature he would not have yielded to the temptations to which he so easily fell a prey. Falsehood and nobility of nature are entirely incompatible.

One other lesson that comes from the Woodstock scaffold is that it is dangerous as it is degrading to attempt to live by one's wits. Aversion to honest and honourable work ruins many lives. The scheme in which Birchall last engaged is from the nature of the case thoroughly disreputable. The farm pupil business is simply a fraud. Those fitted for agricultural work need no middlemen whose only object is to obtain money from their dupes. Young Englishmen or others who desire to follow the occupation of farming in Canada have only to engage with a respectable farmer to gain a useful, practical experience, which the money needlessly paid to so-called agents would help them to turn to account for themselves. The Birchall episode has for the present at least compelled the gentry who lived by the pupil-farming business to withdraw and seek a livelihood by less discredited methods.

Now that the young life, steeped in folly and crime, has been extinguished on the gallows, Birchall's doings will sink into the oblivion they merit. For a time he has occupied a share of public attention that has been astonishing. His sad career has ended ignominiously and may its evil effects end with it.

#### RELIGIOUS DISSENT IN RUSSIA.

IT has been stated that the Greek Church, the established form of religion in the Russian empire, has become so corrupt, so lifeless and formal, that it has almost ceased to exercise a benefi-

cial influence on the hearts and lives of the people. It may be described as more superstitious than religious. Being the established religion, and as dissent is barely tolerated it is needless to add that it is largely employed as an adjunct of the State machinery, and at present it is used more than ever before as an instrument for crushing out if possible some of the discontent so rife throughout the Russian empire. Every means is employed to retain the people within the fold of the Greek Church, and every device resorted to to prevent those desirous of doing so from leaving its fold. Notwithstanding the many advantages on the side of the Greek Church in Russia and the many obstacles in the way of dissent, the latter has nevertheless shown a measure of vitality that is under the circumstances remarkable. The largest body of Russian dissenters are the Stundists, an appellation derived from the German *Stunde*, used in the sense of set times for the observance of worship.

The Russian Stundists do not belong to a compact Church organization. They have no publicly authorized creed or uniform mode of service. They are, however, in thorough sympathy with evangelical Christianity. Their antagonism to the Greek Church originated in the failure of that Church to meet their spiritual needs, and the growth within it of superstitious observances. All that the Greek Church has in common with the Roman Catholic Church, such as auricular confession, penance, fasts, prayers for the dead, prayers to the Virgin Mary and to angels and saints, images, relics, etc., they earnestly protest against. They accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only rule of faith and practice. They believe that the Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Ghost and they reject the Apocrypha. The prevailing mode of worship among them is simple in the extreme. They are averse to liturgical forms. They retain the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but in regard to the former they are divided in opinion as to the proper subjects of the ordinance. A large number follow the view of the Baptists and maintain that only adult baptism should be observed, while the others hold that children ought not to be excluded from the sacrament. The Stundists have no ministry in the sense in which it is understood among us. They have no class set apart specially for the work. They elect presbyters or elders who preside at the religious services and who take the spiritual oversight of the community. These are set apart by the laying on of hands. Russian Stundists have no churches. They hold their meetings in each other's houses, and the services are simple yet fervent. Wooden benches surround the room and in the centre is a table on which are placed a copy of the Scriptures and the hymns used in their worship. The presbyter usually gives the address, but remarks are sometimes made by those present. In the selection of presbyters it is stated to be their object to appoint "the most godly men they have, versed in the Scriptures, able in speech, of sound views, leaders of men."

The great body of the Russian Stundists belong to the humbler class, mostly peasants, though a number of skilled mechanics are found in their ranks. They are suspected of being communistic in their sympathies, which suspicion, however, so far as it has political significance, is not supposed to be well founded. One of their leaders when examined by the authorities regarding his belief, declared that "it is forbidden to touch strong drink; it is forbidden to enrich ourselves at others' expense. We are to help one another—not ourselves." It is only about thirty years since the Stundist movement originated among a German colony settled near the river Bourg. It has spread extensively in the south and west of European Russia, and its adherents number over 100,000. Their profession of faith has evidently an elevating influence over their lives. They dress neatly and becomingly while discarding ornament and display. In contrast with the orthodox Russian peasantry, they are cleanly in their habits. It is the object of all to be able to read the Scriptures for themselves. They are progressive in their ideas, and are no longer content to remain in the dull and degraded ways into which so many of the Russian peasants have fallen.

The Russian Government, which of late has been assuming harsher forms of despotism in Church and State, is now subjecting the dissenters from the National Greek Church to greater disabilities than those under which they were formerly placed. In fact in some quarters these harmless people, from whom much good is to be expected, are made the victims of a relentless persecution, a course of procedure as foolish as it is cruel, for persecution has never yet been able to repress a vital religious force,

## Books and Magazines.

**THE LADIES' HOME JOURNAL.** (Philadelphia: The Curtis Publishing Co.)—This splendid monthly has deservedly attained to a phenomenal success. Its readers have presented to them in each issue a great variety of valuable, instructive and entertaining material. Its tone is unexceptional.

**KNOWLEDGE.** (New York: John Alden.)—This is a weekly magazine "devoted to supplying information such as one seeks in his 'cyclopaedia,' and fails to find there, because it is not up to date. 'The world moves,' and the most important questions that want answering are of to-day, not of yesterday." It is published at a very cheap rate.

**BOOK NEWS.** (Philadelphia: John Wanamaker.)—This useful magazine comes every month and tells you all about the new books, gives you pictures from some of them, always has a bit of poetry, and a portrait of some writer in whom you are interested, and, in addition, short reviews of the more conspicuous among the latest publications.

**THE CANADA EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY.** (Toronto: Canada Educational Monthly Publishing Co.)—The November number introduces an interesting part of Sir Daniel Wilson's convocation address. It is followed by the first instalment of a paper on "Art in Literature," by A. H. Morrison—an able and excellent criticism. There are several other contributions of marked ability all bearing directly on some important phase of educational work.

**THE PULPIT.** (Buffalo: The Lakeside Publishing Co.)—Among other matter it contains sermons by Rev. Dr. Taylor on "The Fertilizing River;" Rev. G. J. Burchett on "Moral Obligations not Diminished by Incorrect Views of Christ;" Rev. W. M. Statham on "Mutual Benevolence;" Rev. Alexander McLaren on "Christ's Plane of Life;" Rev. Dr. Mellor on "Guarding the Faith;" Rev. Prof. Johnson on "A Psalm of Exile;" Rev. M. Brokenshire on "Signs and Their Significance."

**THE ARENA.** (Boston: The Arena Publishing Co.)—The *Arena* for November true to its purpose gives place in its pages to discussions of popular, scientific, social and religious questions from various standpoints. There is a paper on "The Future of the American Drama," by the late Dion Boucicault. Dr. Cyrus Bartol writes on "Sex in Midst." There is a variety of contributions on social and religious and literary subjects, and a symposium on "Destitution in Boston," to which Edward Everett Hale, Rabbi Schindler, Rev. O. P. Gifford and Rev. W. D. Bliss contribute.

**KNOX COLLEGE MONTHLY.** (Toronto: D. T. McAlinsh.)—The opening paper, carefully written and full of accurate scientific information, is by Prof. J. F. Hayes Panton, M.A., F.G.S., on "The Yellowstone Park." The Rev. D. M. Ramsay, B.D., discusses "Weiss' Theory of the Gospels." Dr. Thompson, of Saratoga, contributes an able paper on "The Miracles of our Lord," based on Professor Laidlaw's recent work. Other papers are "Men for Frontier Service," by T. Robertson, missionary superintendent in the North-West; "Longfellow's Shorter Poems," by Jessie Cameron; and "John Henry Newman as a Writer."

**THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT STUDENT.** (Hartford, Conn.: The Student Publishing Co.)—The prominent papers in the November number are: "Zephaniah," by Professor Terry, D.D.; "A Plan for the Study of the Book of Acts," by Professor G. B. Stevens, D.D.; "The Prophecy Concerning Immanuel," by Professor E. L. Curtis; "Expository Preaching," by Professor Franklin W. Fisk, D.D.; "Contentment and Fellowship: or, Paul's Teaching Regarding Property," by Rev. Edward T. Root. "The Life and Times of Christ" is continued, and there is a symposium "On Some Great Bible Questions, Especially Inspiration," to which a number of prominent divines contribute.

**THE ENGLISH ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE.** (New York: Mac-Millan & Co.)—The November number of this popular magazine is very attractive. The papers are interesting and the illustrations are numerous and finely finished. The opening paper by E. Stee is on "Winchester College." Mrs. Jenne contributes "Children's Happy evenings." "A Holiday in South Africa," by Mr. Kelly affords scope for excellent descriptive writing. Professor Percy F. Franklin writes learnedly and interestingly on "Microscopic Labourers and How They Serve Us." "A Royal Surgical Nurse," a short story "Sonia," and F. Marion Crawford's new serial "The Witch of Prague" are interesting features of the number.

**THE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE JOURNAL.** (Montreal.)—The first number of the new volume of this fine academic monthly is fully up to the best of its predecessors. The opening paper is a sermon by the Rev. Dr. Watson, of Huntingdon, on "The Gospel Free and Effectual." The symposium on "The Westminster Confession" has Principal MacVicar for sole contributor, but then he is a host in himself. Prof. Scrimger, during his recent European pilgrimage, picked up "a genuine papal bull issued from the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore at Rome, by Clement XIII., in the third year of his pontificate, A.D. 1761," of which he interestingly writes. Mr. Frew details his journey "To British Columbia." Another very attractive paper in this number is Prof. Campbell's thoughtful inaugural lecture on "The Personal Revelation."

**THE MISSIONARY REVIEW OF THE WORLD.** (New York: Funk & Wagnalls; Toronto: William Briggs.)—The number for November opens with a strong article by Secretary Dr. Eliawood on the "Duty of Christendom to the Jews." Dr. A. T. Pierson follows with a powerful paper on "The Wonderful Story of Madagascar." Dr. Pizer, of Washington, shows that God allots the inheritances of nations. The article on the Congo missions by Mr. Laffin and Miss Clark is fresh, reliable and full. The shorter papers are full of interest, and the translations from foreign missionary magazines highly instructive. The Intelligence and Correspondence Departments are full of good reading. Dr. George F. Herrick gives a graphic paper in the International Section on "The Turkish Empire." Dr. Ellinwood treats of Brazil and South American missions in the Monthly Concert with a thorough knowledge of the subject. Annual reports of more than a dozen missionary societies, and a monthly bulletin of latest news from the entire mission field, rounds out a number that cannot fail to interest, inform and inspire the friends of missions everywhere.