

THE WORLD'S PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL,
OR, TO USE ITS EXACT DEFINITION,
THE FIFTH GENERAL COUNCIL
OF
THE ALLIANCE
OF
THE REFORMED CHURCHES
HOLDING
THE PRESBYTERIAN SYSTEM.

HOW shall I describe that brainy, hearty gathering of learned, thoughtful men from all parts of the world, beginning with the grand opening on the morning of September 21st and ending with the grander closing on the evening of the 29th? It was indeed a feast of fat things; a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

If the human brain is as strong and keen, the human heart as big and tender, and the human soul as lofty in its spiritual aspirations as in any age; if the Presbyterian Church has among its teachers men in brain and heart and soul the equals of any men; and if their training has been behind none in any profession, then it is certainly not too much to say of this Council, strong though the statement may seem, that on the whole the world never saw concentrated in one gathering more of power. It was a sample of the world's ablest thought, animated by high and holy purpose, grappling with great themes. While we have attended many gatherings that for pure and lofty aim could not be behind it, and others, such as revival gatherings, where the Spirit's power, as was fitting, was manifested in a different way, we have never before enjoyed so keen, so high an intellectual treat.

WHAT THE ALLIANCE REPRESENTS.

Ninety-one of the world's religious organizations hold the Presbyterian system, and of these there are eighty in connection with this Alliance. At first sight one might ask, "Why all this multitude of Presbyterian Churches?" Let it be borne in mind that they are in large measure the result, not of either Protestant or Presbyterian tendency to split into sections, but of historical, national and geographical lines, and drawn by a common brotherhood, they here reach beyond the bounds of nation and kindred and history, and show to each other and to the world that they are one.

These churches are in all lands, and of all sizes, from the Evangelical Church in Greece, with its 3 pastoral charges, 3 ministers, 4 elders, 1 licentiate, 1 theological student, 40 communicants and 2 Sabbath schools; or the Free Evangelical Church of Geneva, the home of Calvin, with 3 pastoral charges, 5 ministers, 12 elders, 523 com-

municants and 4 Sabbath schools, on through those of a larger growth, such as the Scottish churches or the Presbyterian Church in Canada, with its 6 Synods, 40 Presbyteries, 950 pastoral charges, 914 ministers, 5,739 elders, 75 licentiates, 232 theological students, 100,102 members, and 1890 S. Schools, with 17,000 teachers, and 143,000 scholars; up to the largest of all, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, with its 30 Synods, 217 Presbyteries, 7,070 pastoral charges, 6,223 ministers, 24,475 elders, 374 licentiates, 1,317 theological students, 806,796 communicants, and 6,870 S. Schools, with 27,415 teachers and 808,644 scholars.

Of many of these churches the majority of our readers have perhaps seldom heard, but some of the comparatively small ones among the thousands of Judah, as well as some of the larger and better known have a long and honorable history.

There are the Reformed Churches in Austria, in Bohemia, in Galicia, and in Moravia, numbering among them 96 ministers, 1,179 elders, and 72,622 communicants. There is the Missionary Christian Church of Belgium, and the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands; the Reformed Church of France with 650 ministers and 86,000 communicants; the Waldensian Evangelical Church with 79 ministers and 18,361 members. There are the churches in Russia, Switzerland, Italy and Spain; in England, Scotland, and Wales; and in North and South America; in Japan, in China, in India and Africa; in Australia and New Zealand; the grand total of churches holding the Presbyterian systems, being reported as 91, containing 236 Synods, 1,249 Presbyteries, 23,437 pastoral charges, 23,951 ministers, 120,933 elders, 2,594 licentiates, 4,169 theological students, 4,092,965, communicants, and 25,7088 S. schools with 405,985 teachers and 3,020,765 scholars, and representing a population about of twenty millions.

WHEN AND WHY THE ALLIANCE WAS ORGANIZED.

Twenty years ago the desire that had long been felt by many for a visible bond of union among the scattered members of the Presbyterian family, found a happy expression in the first meeting of the Alliance held in Edinburgh in 1876. Among the active promoters of the movement were Drs. Blaikie, Cairns, McCosh, and Schaff, and other great and good men, both in the United States and Britain, and on the Continent of Europe, most of whom now rest from their labors.

It was felt by these men that such a bond would do much to encourage and strengthen and aid the smaller and weaker churches, more especially those laboring under special disadvantages on the Continent of Europe, that it would broaden and deepen the sympathy of the stronger churches, would aid in some measure in bringing about unions among the different bodies of Presbyterians among the same peoples, would give