

have been personally associated in the past. Even the most self-complacent mortal will have his splendidly poised equanimity disturbed by reflecting on the shortcomings and failings that become only too apparent, when subjected to the calm scrutiny turned on them when passing the milestones on life's journey.

Only those who fail utterly to realize the divine significance of human life can reconcile themselves to float down the stream of time without a resolute effort to make the best of it in the matter of character building. Under the impulses that come with the opening year, half-formed resolves instinctively arise in the mind that the time to come shall witness a marked improvement in many respects. The vanished years, like another region, are paved with good intentions. Why is it that the good resolutions so readily formed at the beginning of the year are so soon disregarded? Is it due to the inherent weakness of poor human nature and must this purposeless vacillation continue indefinitely? Perhaps one reason why so many resolutions are not kept is because they have been formed in a hazy, dreamy state of mind when the soul was only half-awake, and when the time came for putting them into practice, old formed habits and the force of circumstances were too strong for the weak resolves that perished in the seclusion in which they originated. Seeing that so many good resolutions share the same untoward fate, is it then the part of a wise man to resolve to have done with the making of any more of them, and suffer his life to drift onward as circumstances may determine? He who would do this could not possibly be regarded as wise.

In this as in other respects people attempt too much. It is only by concentration of effort that lasting results are achieved. It would be well to direct attention to one or two points of character standing in need of special development. Of course all whose consciences are enlightened by God's word will strenuously resolve to avoid every form of evil. There can be no compromise with known sin. The tears of repentance will be followed by the firm determination to walk in the paths of righteousness. But strong symmetrical Christian character is much more than a circle of negations. Duty requires the doing of good as well as the shunning of evil. In all lives, even in the best, there is room and scope for indefinite advancement. To make progress in the right direction, specific things must be steadily kept in view. If one has on close inspection been enabled to discover the plague of his heart, the one special duty for him is to be at all times on his guard that he may obtain deliverance from his besetting sin. If he is not on the alert it will be. There may be other attainments for which he longs, but the one thing to which his energies must for the time be bent is the determination to conquer the foe that confronts him. Another may find his attachment to some specially incumbent duty growing weak. Then let his resolution be to strengthen the things that remain, lest his moral and spiritual nature suffer loss through lack of vigilance over himself. Still another may discover that worldliness is making inroads upon him. If this is not resisted he may soon find himself in its grasp, and he ceases to be a free man. His obvious duty is to resist the devil of worldliness if he desires soul prosperity and health. There will be no difficulty in finding out what is the right path to follow. If we each one take the Scriptures for our guide, they will lead us in the ways of righteousness. We must resolve to follow their leading. By practising what we know we shall be led onward to higher truth and fuller blessedness. Resolute steps on the way of life will by and by make our progress easy. What now requires determined effort and is only accomplished with difficulty will soon become second nature and the great purposes of life will in the end be realized.

If past failures and humiliations have taught us the weakness of human nature, let them teach us now no less distinctly the strength and sufficiency of divine grace by which alone we will be enabled to form right resolves and carry them out to completion.

CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN.

IN Eastern lands changes are usually slow and infrequent. Conservatism is strong; usages and customs become stereotyped, and age succeeds age with but little apparent alteration. To this stagnation the empire of Japan during recent years presents a striking exception. For centuries its people manifested the usual characteristics of Asiatics. The religions of the East, Sintoism, Buddhism and Confucianism held undisputed sway, and

in civil affairs untempered despotism prevailed. In the sixteenth century Francois Xavier visited Japan, and, in accordance with Jesuit methods, planted Romanism, which flourished for many years. The irresistible desire, inseparable from Jesuitism, to meddle with the affairs of government, brought about so strong an antagonism that the order of Jesus was expelled, and the adherents of the Romish Church were massacred in thousands. The antipathy to foreigners was deep-seated, and while not yet altogether removed, it is remarkable that western civilization should have had so much attraction for the Japanese as has evidently been the case during the last few years.

Various causes have induced the Japanese to adopt the civilization of the western nations. Frequent intercourse has done much to remove prejudices. The large number of the higher class of Japanese youth sent abroad by the Government to receive education in Europe and America has produced a marked impression on the minds of their fellow-countrymen, and the result is that within the last twenty years Japan has passed through an almost bloodless revolution. From a complete despotism it has become a constitutionally-governed country. A very comprehensive and complete system of national education has been adopted. It embraces primary, intermediate and high school, and there is an admirably equipped national university at Tokio, modelled on the plan of the German universities, with one hundred and twenty professors and lecturers. In the management of public enterprises, such as mail and telegraphic service, navigation and such like, Japan could give lessons to nations that have for long had greater advantages.

The progress of Christianity in Japan within the last few years has been remarkable. American and European Churches have sent their representatives there in considerable numbers, and their labours have been abundantly blessed. Not only has the country been open to missionary effort, but the minds of the people have been eagerly receptive of the precious truths of the Gospel. Large and flourishing native churches are to be met with throughout the empire, and what is still more encouraging, there is already a numerous body of native pastors, whose ability and earnestness are conspicuous. It was hoped that the different branches of the evangelical Church would be able to unite and form the Church of Christ in Japan. Though the union feeling was strong, and earnest efforts were made for its embodiment in a united Church, the obstacles were too powerful to permit its accomplishment at the present time. Many of the young Japanese converts belonging to the Congregational Church were so attached to its polity that they refused to coalesce with their brethren of the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. Though failing to unite formally, there is no apparent lack of brotherly feeling among the native Christians of Japan.

The progress of Christianity in that interesting empire, as might be expected, has met with considerable opposition. The Buddhist priesthood has in various places attempted to rouse a reaction against the spread of the new faith. Many of these priests have been bitter and determined in their hostility, while others have been sympathetic hearers of the Gospel message. Prominent politicians and Government officials, though remaining personally uninfluenced, have favoured Christianity because of the perceptible benefits that follow its adoption, and because it is in harmony with the western civilization which they desire to become prevalent. In spite, then, of the opposition Christianity has to encounter, it is making rapid and steady progress. It is stated that there are now over 20,000 who have made a Christian profession in Japan, and that the rate of increase is about 500 a month.

The Japanese Church is deeply imbued with the missionary spirit. The members of the Churches engage in active Christian work, and are remarkably successful in extending the triumphs of the Cross in the circles in which they personally move. The Sabbath school is a flourishing institution, and religious education is receiving much attention and making encouraging progress. The same also can be said of the charitable and benevolent institutions that owe their origin to the teaching and spirit of the Gospel. A Japanese translation of the Holy Scriptures has been completed, and as the Japanese are a reading people, it is likely that they will become familiar with the contents of the sacred volume. The success that has attended missionary effort in Japan ought to prove a fresh incentive to the Christian Church to advance with earnest consecration in the great work given her to do, to preach the Gospel to every creature.

Books and Magazines.

OUR LITTLE ONES AND THE NURSERY. (Boston: The Russell Publishing Co.)—Admirable alike in reading matter and pictorial illustration.

LITTELL'S LIVING AGE. (Boston: Littell & Co.)—This indispensable weekly, containing as it does the latest and the best literature of the time, has just begun a new volume.

HARPER'S YOUNG PEOPLE. (New York: Harper & Brothers.)—With unfailing regularity this magazine presents its readers every week with a choice collection of papers, stories, poems and pictures, affording them instruction and delight.

ST. NICHOLAS. (New York: The Century Co.)—*St. Nicholas* maintains to the full the excellence to which it has attained. The contents are varied, instructive, entertaining, and elevated in tone. The illustrations are plentiful and of a high class.

SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.)—Josiah Royce gives a most interesting account of Australia in a finely illustrated paper in the January number of *Scribner's*. Perhaps the most attractive paper in the present issue is Henry M. Stanley's "The Pigmy of the great African Forest." Sir Edwin Arnold's "Japonica," the second part of which appears this month, will also attract admiring readers. Other noteworthy papers in the number are "Modern Fire Apparatus" and "The Rothenburg Festival-Play." The other contents are every way worthy of the reputation this admirable magazine has attained.

THE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE JOURNAL. (Montreal.)—The able and enterprising staff to whose care the interests of this college monthly are committed have succeeded in making it very bright and attractive. There is a fair array of contributors to the present number. Rev. G. D. Bayne, of Pembroke, leads off with a good sermon on "The Compassion of Jesus." Professor Scrimger is the contributor to the symposium on "The Westminster Confession of Faith," and gives in addition a short article on "The Oldest Christian Church in the World." Dr. R. F. Burns, our own "Knoxonian," Dr. A. T. Pierson, and others rank among the contributors. Professor Cousirat, in the French department, has an admirable paper "De la Langue Française dans la Société Moderne."

HARPER'S MAGAZINE. (New York: Harper & Brothers.)—There are several decidedly interesting papers in the January number of this old and reliable magazine. The opening one is "The Outlook in Southern California," by Charles Dudley Warner. Then come "London Music Halls," by F. Anstey; and "Impressions of Peru," by Theodore Child, all of them finely illustrated. M. de Blowitz gives another chapter of his Memoirs, telling how he became a journalist. Charles Egbert Craddock, the new lady novelist, who has justly earned distinction, begins a new story "In the 'Stranger People's' Country," which is marked by the vigorous descriptive and analytic powers of this strong writer. There are several excellent short stories, and meritorious poetical contributions, together with the departments which constitute an attractive feature of *Harper's*.

THE CENTURY. (New York: The Century Co.)—One of the chief attractions of this leading magazine during the year will be the "Tallyrand Memoirs," the first instalment of which appears in this month's number. It is most interesting and presents historical facts in a striking light. The California papers are also very attractive. "A Romance of Morgan's Rough Riders" gives a graphic account of the raid into Ohio, Morgan's capture and subsequent escape. Kenyon Cox forms the subject of an appreciative critical paper, and the illustrations are artistic masterpieces. Mr. Rockhill continues his account of Tibetan travel. There is a fine descriptive paper, amply illustrated, "Along the Lower James," and a deeply interesting account by Octave Thanet of "An Irish Gentlewoman in the Famine Time." The serials "Colonel Carter of Cartersville" and "Sister Dolorosa" are continued, and the number is enlivened by several excellent short stories. Well-known poets sing in tuneful numbers, and the other contents are up to the high average maintained by the *Century*.

A HAND-BOOK OF SABBATH SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND WORK. By David Fotheringham. (Toronto: Presbyterian Printing and Publishing Co., 5 Jordan Street.)—Mr. David Fotheringham, from his long and intimate connection with educational work, and his successful efforts in Sabbath school management, abundantly qualify him for the preparation of this admirable and compact little Hand-Book. It was prepared for and recommended by the Committee on Sabbath Schools to the last General Assembly at Ottawa. After the introduction come brief, clear and concise chapters on Organization, Government, Class Government, Classification, Work, Systematic Giving, Registration, Teaching, Questioning, Teachers' Meetings, Accommodation. Then there are appendices containing several useful and necessary forms. In clear, orderly presentation of valuable hints for the successful prosecution of Sabbath school work, in short compass, this admirable little Hand-Book cannot be surpassed.

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.)—"The fancy took me to go to Noto," says Mr. Percival Lowell, in his paper on "Noto: An Unexplored Corner of Japan"; and where Noto is, and how he went there, is not only the subject of the opening article in the January *Atlantic*, but is to be the subject of several articles which are to follow. Cleveland Abbe's paper, which will command attention, suggests "A New University Course," this course to be devoted to terrestrial physics as a distinct department of instruction. As for "The House of Martha," that cloistered establishment allows one of its inhabitants, acting as amanuensis, to listen to the dictation of a love-story under the sophism that it is told to illustrate the manners and customs of the foreigner. Mr. Charles Worcester Clark writes about "Compulsory Arbitration," in which he says that one of the most striking features of our easy-going American character is ready submission to the domination of our servants, whether it be Bridget in our kitchen, the railway in our streets, or Congress in the Capitol at Washington. Professor Royce has a long paper on Hegel, Adolphe Cohn writes about "Boulangism," and Mr. Henry Charles Lea indicates the "Lesson of the Pennsylvania Election." Sophia Kirk gives a pretty sketch of "A Swiss Family Village"; and "A Novelist of the Jura," Mademoiselle Adele Huguennin, is the subject of a long article which shows her to be a kind of Swiss Charles Egbert Craddock. The "Comedy of the Custom House," in the Contributors' Club, is racy and readable.