

Book Notices.

The Colonial Parson of New England. A Picture. By FRANK SAMUEL CHILD. New York: The Baker & Taylor Co. Toronto: William Briggs. Price, \$1.25.

The parson has been a favourite subject in literature. Nowhere was he more of an autocrat than in colonial New England. He touched life at every point, and, in men like Cotton and Increase Mather, dominated society. This volume is an exceedingly interesting study of the shrewd Dutch dominie of New York, and the somewhat worldly Virginia clergyman of whom Thackeray says, "Noblemen's hangers-on, insolvent parsons who had quarrelled with justice or the bailiff, they brought their stained cassocks into the colony in hopes of finding a living there."

Our author devotes himself especially to the New England parson. The book gives an extraordinary revelation of the drinking habits of a hundred years ago. At an ordination service seventy-four bowls of punch, eight of brandy, and twenty-eight bottles of wine, besides cherry rum, were used. Another parson stowed away thirty-eight barrels of cider for use, and public thanks was given for the large harvest yield of cider.

A chapter on the style of sermonizing is exceedingly curious. A vigorous parson would preach and pray for five hours at a stretch. Many of them had very large families. Increase Mather had twelve, and Cotton Mather had fifteen children, and others still more. Many of these became also ministers.

It was the day of long pastorates, one lasting for seventy years, and many others over half a century. The promise, "With long life will I satisfy thee," was strikingly fulfilled. One venerable minister is recorded as reaching the ripe age of 103 years, and leaving 206 living descendants. Others are mentioned as living ninety-one years with a pastorate of sixty-seven years; ninety years, with a pastorate of sixty-six; eighty-six years with a pastorate of sixty-two; eighty-five years with a pastorate of sixty years. One hundred and eighty-nine graduates of Harvard attained or passed the age of eighty-four, most of them ministers. The book abounds in curious anecdotes and throws much light on the social and religious condition of the times. It is daintily bound in white and gold with gilt top.

Quo Vadis. A Narrative of the Time of Nero. By HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ. Translated from the Polish by JEREMIAH CURTIN. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. Toronto: William Briggs. Pp. 541. Price, \$2.00.

It is a curious illustration of the cosmopolitan character of the republic of letters that this story of old pagan Rome is written in the Polish language and translated by an American scholar, who dates his introduction from Guatemala, is dedicated to a French gentleman, M. Auguste Comte, and published by a Boston firm. Henryk Sienkiewicz is the author of a remarkable trilogy of tales on the romantic history of Poland, Turkey, and Sweden, which have won him very distinguished reputation.

This narrative of the struggle between Christianity and paganism for the possession of the world is one which appeals to wider sympathies and interest. It is an intensely graphic picture of a very stormy period. Some even of Caesar's household and near to the throne were members of the new and accursed sect of Christians, which it was the purpose of Caesar to stamp out. The persecutions of the early believers are vividly described. We are present at the worship of the infant Church, we observe its rites, we study its institutions, we listen to its holy hymns, we follow the martyrs to the dim crypts of the Catacombs, to the gloomy vaults of the Mamertine prison, to the fearful persecutions of the arena and the circus, where gentle maids and matrons, sewn up in the skins of wild beasts, are worried by Molossian hounds, are butchered to make a Roman holiday, or, swathed in garments of pitch, are burned as living torches to illumine the revels of the most brutal monster the world ever saw.

In the pages of this book pass before us Pretonius, by turns the favourite and the victim of Nero; Marcus Vinicius, the pagan who, through love for the Christian maiden Lygia, becomes himself a Christian; and even the august figures of St. Peter and St. Paul. But the masterpiece of depiction is that monster of wickedness, whom one of his victims in the amphitheatre denounces as Anti-Christ, and predicts for him the just judgment of God. We follow Nero from the orgies of his golden house to his scenes of guilt and blood, and to his