

Current Topics and Events.

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

This is one of the most notable of the great religious assemblies of the world. It is a great pleasure to enjoy even for a short time the sessions of this important body. We give here in abridged form some condensed notes of the Conference, which we furnished for publication elsewhere.

The Conference represents over 100 conferences, 12,000 ministers, 2,000,000 members and probably about 10,000,000 adherents. This is the only legislative body of the entire Church, and its laws are binding upon all its members from New York to San Francisco, as well as in its widely scattered missions throughout the world. Alike on the banks of the Ganges and the banks of the Congo, its decisions carry the weight of final authority. Among the delegates are representatives from the Missions of Germany, Italy, Sweden, India, China, Japan, Mexico and Africa. Several of the Oriental delegates wear the native costume of their respective countries.

The Conference is composed of the very *elite* of the Church, both clerical and lay. Distinguished divines, editors, college presidents, and professors, judges, ex-army officers, with one or two ex-generals, bankers, merchants and professional men, compose a body who for intelligence and ability it would be hard to surpass.

Not many buildings would accommodate the deliberative sessions of so numerous a body, and also furnish sufficient committee room accommodation and space for the large and deeply interested audiences, who gather on the more important occasions. The new Metropolitan Opera House, however, is

found to admirably answer the purpose. The delegates occupy the main floor. Above this rise the galleries, five in number. The first two are composed entirely of boxes or stalls. These are rented for a large sum, which will go far to meet the necessarily large expenses of the Conference. The upper galleries, accommodating 2,000, are free to visitors.

One of the most conspicuous figures in the Conference is Dr. William Taylor, missionary Bishop of Africa. He is in popular appreciation more like a mediæval hero of a romance than a matter-of-fact nineteenth century preacher. He first became known to fame as "California Taylor," from the dauntless courage of his preaching in the saloons and streets of San Francisco in the lawless gold-fever days of '49. He is the founder of several self-supporting missions in India and in South America, and recently he has been taking up the same *role* in the Free State of the Congo. He refuses to accept salary for himself or for his hundred and more missionaries on the Congo. He is planting self-supporting mission stations along the route of that great river, as centres of civilization and Christianity to the Pagan tribes around. His large, bony frame, his keen and piercing eyes, his long and venerable beard, would make him a striking figure in any assembly. For many years he refused any personal salary, supporting himself by the sale of his racy books, which are found in many a Canadian home. In his sturdy independence he has more than once made his missionary voyages in the steerage of crowded and ill-equipped vessels — literally, among the "steers" and sleeping on the deck. In his "journeyings oft" and missionary zeal, and determined self-support, he is, to my mind, more