

must be again confessed that at the outset this task seems a sufficiently perplexing one. The numberless apparent incongruities and conflicting aspects of Stevenson's life might, at first sight, tempt one to take a cynical view of the situation and to count him among those who smile at faith. Yet no one who knows the spirit of his work would permanently accept that easy but impossible solution. Even after a slight acquaintance, the religious element is apparent and further study only serves to show it more deep and clear."

The subject is pursued in this spirit for about 300 pages and Stevenson's work considered from many points of view. The book turns out to be a careful study of Stevenson's literary art with the desire to find that spirit that moves behind it. Chapter III, "Actor and Preacher" is important and interesting, as are also the four chapters on "The Gift of Vision" and "The Instinct of Travel." According to Mr. Kelman, Stevenson combined in himself the two elements named Hellenism and Hebraism and was both actor and preacher. He loved the picturesque and was intensely moral and at times, even homiletical. "Religion must ever be expressed in the man's own particular terms and style, and is seldom quite unconscious of itself. But surely religion with a romantic air and a dash of scarlet is as legitimate as religion in dull colors and carrying (as Stevenson might have put it) a large umbrella. But he strikes an attitude? My dear reader so do you and I. The difference probably is that his attitude is picturesque. Do not let us look askance at the more graceful worshipper." And again on the second head: "Stevenson was a born preacher. It is said that preaching is in the blood of all Scotsmen, and that they go all over the world, and in whatsoever place they find themselves, good or bad, they conceive of it as a pulpit and proceed to deliver a discourse. With Stevenson there was the additional fact, as he reminds one of his correspondents, when the letter has become a kind of sermon, that he was 'the grandson of the manse.'" To another he writes, after a few sentences of sermonizing, "I would rise from the dead to preach!" The conclusion reached is, that to Stevenson was given a brilliant vision of a certain sketch of sunlit earth and he travelled joyously in that light to the end. To those who know what a battle that life was, these words mean much. The book raises many questions that are worthy of discussion and on the whole, they are dealt with in a fair and healthful manner. Without attempting to discuss these questions, we can cordially recommend the book as worthy of repeated thoughtful reading.

Whatever attention is paid to the art of oral reading in schools, and compels us to say the results, as manifested in the case of the "grown ups," are not conspicuously successful. Some ministers read well; others do not. But what shall be said of the vocal reading by the average

lay man and lay woman? If there is any virtue in the sort of reading aloud of reports common to most of the church societies—reading which sets one thinking of incomprehensibility growing out of inaudibility—then are we, indeed, a virtuous people. The ability to read well—i. e., distinctly, understandingly, and sympathetically is an element of persuasive power. Happy those households possessing a good and willing reader! Why are good readers so scarce? Is it some defect in school training? Or is it the teachers who are themselves untrained? A good deal of painful reading and speaking in even the smallest church society gatherings grows out of self-consciousness—a real and distressing malady, no doubt, but even for that there must be a remedy.

#### Literary Notes.

The opening article in *The Literary Collector* for August gives Some Account of the Private Library of Mr. William Nelson of Paterson, New Jersey. Mr. Nelson is an enthusiast on the subject of New Jersey history and has a remarkably interesting collection of documents in connection therewith. Edgar Allen Poe figures quite largely in this library. "Concerning a Certain Affectation of the Great" is a brightly written article in regard to the autograph collector. Other articles of interest are those entitled On the Question of an American Bibliographical Society and Bibliomania in New York Thirty Years Ago. *The Literary Collector* Press, Greenwich, Conn.

In the September *Blackwood's "Sigma"* in his *Personalia* writes of men connected with Art and Letters, telling many excellent stories of Swinburne, Burne Jones, Rossetti, and other well known artists. One good anecdote is of an encounter with an old fellow of Thackeray. "Sigma" met this man at a dinner and hearing that he had attended the Charterhouse asked him whether by any chance he was there with Thackeray. "Thackeray, sir; what Thackeray?" he asked, with a contemptuous stare. "I mean the great Thackeray," I rejoined rather astonished. "What?" he rejoined; "the fellow who wrote books? Oh yes, he was my fag, and a snivelling little beggar I thought him; often have I given him a sound kick for a false quantity in his Latin verses. I thought nothing of him, sir—nothing, I can assure you!" "Ah, but," I exclaimed, "you have changed your opinion since, of course?" "Not at all," he growled, "not at all; why should I?" "Why, on account of his books," I retorted, fairly staggered. "Never read a syllable of them, I give you my word!" he growled with magnificent complacency. The Session is discussed at some length, and also the Food Question in 1903, and there are several interesting articles of a general nature. Leonard Scott Publication Company, New York.

With its issue of September 2nd *The Christian Observer*, Louisville, Kentucky, one of the foremost religious newspapers of America, completed ninety years of continued publication. We congratulate *The Observer* on having attained so goodly an age without having lost any of its vigor, but rather with increased influence for good. The following account of the circumstances

leading to the publication of this paper will be of interest to our readers.

"At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was not a single religious newspaper published in the world. When the century opened, the horizon was blazing with the camp-fires of the enemies of evangelical religion. Infidelity was rampant. Thomas Paine, who was admired on account of his service in political matters, had been picking flaws in the Holy Scripture, and heralding the dawn of an age of reason, and sowing broadcast the seeds of infidelity. Hume had been trying to demonstrate the impossibility of the supernatural. Voltaire had been sneering at everything that brought help or hope into a sinning and sorrowful world. But the age of reason had proved an age of terror. The rights of man could not be vindicated when the rights of God were scouted. When the Cross went down the guillotine went up. The darkness of death rested on the earth. And about the year 1800 the church was wrapped in apathy and gloom. Even in this favored land only about one in fifteen of its inhabitants were communicants in any evangelical church.

It was at this period that the Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander, the founder of Princeton Seminary, and Rev. Dr. John H. Rice, the founder of the Union Seminary in Virginia, and some other grand men, conceived the idea, and originated the *weekly religious newspaper*. Though the nineteenth century has produced many wonderful inventions, the religious newspaper is one of its most important creations. After repeated efforts the brethren secured the services of Mr. John W. Scott, who was a ruling elder in the Pine Street church, Philadelphia, and also a practical printer, as publisher. A weekly newspaper was started, called the "*Religious Remembrancer*." It made its first appearance on September 4, 1812. It has been published regularly ever since; and for the last sixty years has been known as the "*Christian Observer*."

The prospectus published in the first number presented a very comprehensive view of what a weekly religious newspaper ought to be,—a plan for a paper that has not been largely improved upon by any of the thousands of religious journals which have been started since that time. The *Remembrancer* was a little sheet of four pages, each page not quite as large as a page of the *Christian Observer*. But it was an inspiration to the whole Church. The same religious enthusiasm which brought it into existence, and which it kindled, called into existence the Theological Seminaries, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the Home and Foreign Mission Boards of the several churches, the Sabbath school movement, and indeed, much of the ecclesiastical machinery which has worked such mighty changes in the religious conditions of the country.

In the year 1800, there were only 364,872 communicants in all the Protestant churches in this land. Now there are about 22,265,000; then about one in every fifteen of the population was a communicating member of some evangelical church; now about one in every four. The religious press is one of the mighty agencies which God has thus signally blessed in the extension of his kingdom on earth.