

Presbyterianism of the Westminster Church is of the bright, lively, popular variety. The services and sermons are not tiresome. Neither are they marked by that massiveness and severe dignity which one associates with some Presbyterian churches. The Psalms are sung to lively tunes, the prayers are short, there is an anthem by the choir during the offertory and the sermon is rapid, sketchy, and illustrative. I have been in scarcely any church in Toronto with less of the traditional flavour of past days in it. Those old divines sitting in Henry VII's chapel, discussing catechisms and confessions of faith, I never thought of them once. I doubt if the congregation could stand a sermon of the heavy theological sort, such as some of their ancestors listened to with gusto a century ago.

There was a very good congregation present at both services on Sunday, and it is evident that the church and its services are very attractive to a highly respectable and intelligent class of people. They may be said to occupy the centre of one of the best church-going districts in Toronto. I do not know whether the pews are as wide from back to front as they are at most churches, or whether less room is given to aisles than is usual, but certainly the effect is produced of a solidly-massed congregation. You have the feeling of joining in the services with a crowded assembly, whereby a sort of electric touch of sympathy and contact is maintained which is altogether impossible with a sparse attendance. In the singing exercises, too, the congregation keeps up to time far better than is usual, even in the back rows, where it is a common thing for people to be a beat or two behind the choir. Something of this may be due to the admirable acoustic properties of Westminster Church, and I am inclined to think that the arched roof, with its hanging, many-branched lamps has something to do with it. Whether by happy accident or design, the building is certainly well-adapted in every way for a fraternal, worshipping assembly.

Nowhere is the tendency towards a full attendance more manifest than in the choir pews in front of the organ. Seats there, and even standing room, are evidently at a premium. The organ is ably manipulated by a lady organist who has a capital notion of "time," while the proper modulation and phrasing give evidence of careful leadership. There are also several particularly good voices, while the general average of choral ability is high. The anthems on Sunday were rather of the religio-sentimental than the ecclesiastical order. They were more appeals to poetic feeling than ascriptions of praise. They were sung in a touching and impressive manner. Sometimes there was an interval for a solo or a quartette and in such case the vocalization left nothing to be desired, while the deportment of the members of the choir was reverent and devotional. It may be said, indeed, that a proper behaviour in the "house of the Lord" is a mark of those who attend this church.

On Sunday morning last the services were conducted in the absence of the pastor, Rev. John Neil, B.A., by a retired missionary of advanced years, who has laboured among the lepers of India. He was a spare ascetic looking man with white hair and beard, and his rather prominent eyebrows shadowed keen and penetrating eyes. His style was severely simple, never wandering into the ornate and oratorical, and he preached a sermon of the old school, in which he emphasized the atonement as the central doctrine of the scriptures. He said that if this were taken away from the Bible it would be of no more value than the Hindoo Shasters, the books of Confucius, or any other of the sacred books of heathen religions. His text being, "My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed," he took the opportunity of controverting to some extent the doctrine of transubstantiation, and dwelt much on the mystical assimilation of the spirit of Christ by believers, deprecating rational interpretations and the obstacle of regarding the truth of the text by the light of fallible human reason. It was a sermon to make one think and it prompted questions that many people long to have answered. It is the fashion of the preaching of the day to avoid to a great extent controversial questions. The sermon of Sunday morning made at least one hearer think of years ago when definite doctrinal theology formed the chief material of pulpit discourses.

Rev. John Neil, B.A., who was in his accustomed place in the evening, looks a somewhat imposing and dignified figure in the pulpit in his ministerial black gown and bands. He is an active, well-set-up man in the prime of life, with a substantial head from which the hair has somewhat retired,

so that its liberal cranial development is fully observable. What remains is iron grey, and the rev. gentleman wears a moustache. The head is of the Bismarckian type, but Mr. Neil has not the bushy eyebrows and rugged look of the great ex-chancellor. He gives you the idea of a sane, well-balanced, vigorous personality. There is nothing distinctively clerical about him. He might pass for a successful barrister or a prominent business man who is inclined to look on the sunny side of things, and who finds a good deal of satisfaction in the daily round of his duties and the recreations with which they are interspersed. His aspect does not convey the impression of one who will spend his days pondering on the insoluble problems of life, or will even be much troubled by them; he will rather turn to the work that lies next to his hand and do it with all his might. A cheerful activity pervades his pulpit style and is observable in every vigorous gesture and movement. Quite at home in his ministerial duties and with perfect *aplomb*, he has a pleasant voice and a very great facility of speech, never pausing for a word, so that sometimes the word seems a little in advance of the thought. So much is this the case that a deliberate person would feel a little hurried by his manner, it is so prompt and business-like that suggests the gospel-while-you-wait idea. One sentence succeeds another so rapidly that you would not have time to take them in if they were at all difficult. All, however, is facile. The style is that of an elegantly written primer of rudiments, and if the preacher spoke twice as fast, you would have no difficulty in keeping up with him. The sermon on Sunday night was from the verses in which the Apostle, after urging the "putting on of the whole armour of God," enumerates the different pieces thereof. Nothing could be more pleasing or pictorial than the way in which the probable origin of the words was sketched. Paul in his own hired house at Rome, but chained to a Roman soldier, who, after serving an allotted time was replaced by another, was clearly put before us. Then the typical quality of the various articles of warfare was to some extent described. Here, however, the preacher had set himself a somewhat difficult feat, and the differentiation was scarcely clear. The sword was very much like the breastplate, and the helmet was of the same nature as the shoes. But the great lack of the discourse was that the deep seriousness of the conflict in which the Christian has to engage,—a hand to hand struggle in which flesh and heart often fail and the smoke and blood and sweat of which are enough to try the strongest faith—was scarcely apparent. It was as though the sword, breastplate and spear were gay properties, to be used in some sunny tournament where all was bright and delightful. The deeps of life were not touched.

J.R.N.

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Music and the Drama.

NOTICE that Robert Freund, the great Hungarian pianist, will arrive in the United States sometime early in the new year and give a series of concerts throughout the country. He will be assisted by Miss Lillian Sanderson who is said to be an unusually gifted and charming singer. I have never heard Freund play, but have always understood that he is a very poetic and impassioned performer, and stamps everything with his own individuality. Artists flit across the Atlantic now-a-days as easily as going from Buffalo to New York a few years ago: a good thing for this country, as the people are thus enabled to hear many famous artists which in itself is more or less of an education. Freund was a Liszt pupil. Did you ever think how many of the present day celebrated pianists were pupils of Liszt? For instance:—Emil Sauer, Alfred Reisenauer, Moriz Rosenthal, Bernard Stavenhagen, Eugen d'Albert, Arthur Friedheim, Alexander Siloti, Sophie Menter, and others who are all in the very first rank. Speaking of Friedheim reminds me that he has been giving recitals in Copenhagen this fall with tremendous success.

Rivarde is a most refined violinist. In *legato* he is particularly entrancing, as his tone is exquisite in its purity and mellowness. He is not unlike Sarasate in looks, as he is dark and slender, and he wears his hair in the same fluffy, disordered manner. He has not, however, the passion or brilliancy of the distinguished Spaniard. His playing of the Greig Sonata in G, op 13, for piano and violin, with Mons Aime Lachaume at the piano, at the Foresters concert, was really beautiful, although the piano somewhat overweighted