

THE ASSEMBLY AT WASHINGTON.

Mr. Editor: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, North, now meeting in this city is attracting attention, not only in the United States, but in our own Church in Canada. Their great work of Home and Foreign Missions, their work among the seven millions of freedmen of the South, and along other lines, into all of which they are throwing themselves with a grand and growing energy, is in itself an inspiration.

Permit me a few words on a point in which, though small in itself, our own Assembly might copy them with advantage, and that is, in the manner of conducting each morning their opening services. A standing complaint with us is the difficulty of getting members to attend the opening of devotional exercises. These services in this Assembly are a free open meeting. Each morning a new chairman, not the Moderator, gives out a verse of a hymn, reads a few verses, perhaps adds a word, and then the meeting is thrown open, and for half an hour, from nine o'clock to half-past nine, brief volunteer words of prayer, address or song follow in quick succession, making a brief stimulating service. At half-past nine the Moderator takes his place, offers a brief prayer, and business begins. May I be pardoned the suggestion that it would add to the interest of the opening services in our Assembly, thereby inducing a larger attendance and giving a still more healthy stimulus to the work of the day, if the simple change were made of having the opening half hour a brief volunteer service. It is a very simple matter, but I have been deeply impressed by it and have taken the liberty of mentioning it.

An all-absorbing subject has been the "Briggs case". Edinburgh has the reputation of being interested in discussions before the General Assemblies, but Washington does not lag behind. The galleries for visitors are thronged with men and women while many are unable to get in. After one session spectators often keep their seats through two hours' recess in order to have their places at the opening of next session.

The case came before the Assembly by appeal from the decision of the Presbytery of New York, which had acquitted him of false teaching, and there were two points to be considered.

The first question was,—"Shall the Assembly entertain the appeal?" or remit it to the Synod of New York. Dr. Briggs wished for the latter and was heard patiently for nearly five hours as he read a careful and elaborate argument in support of his plea. The appellants occupied about half that time, the Assembly deliberated for four hours, in ten minute speeches from every side alternately, and then, as the matter would in any case have to be finally decided by the Assembly, as there is so much of unrest in the Church, and as there is nothing to be gained by prolonging the unrest for another year, decided by a vote of four hundred and nine to one hundred and forty-five to entertain the appeal and proceed with the case.

Having thus decided, the next great matter is the consideration of the case on its merits. It was begun this morning, and is to be conducted along the following lines: The appellants to have four and a half hours to present their case, Dr. Briggs to have seven hours in his defence, the Presbytery of New York to have two hours, the Assembly two hours and then the vote is to be taken. At the present writing, Monday evening, Dr. Lampe, on behalf of the appellants, has presented the charges in a very able document, and Dr. Briggs is replying.

The vote on entertaining the appeal was a remarkable one, five hundred and fifty-four commissioners answering when their names were called, only five or six failing to respond. The case will probably take end by Wednesday evening.

The Assembly is characterized by marked ability and by a fine spirit, calm, judicial, earnest, with kindly courtesy toward Dr. Briggs and at the same time an earnest stand for the truth. The appellants closed their case this afternoon by the frank declaration, in substance as follows: "Dr. Briggs has the fullest liberty to proclaim his teachings to the world, but the Church has her liberties also, and while he has the fullest liberty to teach, she should not be compelled to be responsible for that teaching by his doing so in the name of the Presbyterian Church."

Washington, D.C., Monday, 29 May '93.

THE BRIGGS CASE.

As an expression of "outside opinion," the following editorial in last Saturday's Globe-Democrat will be read with interest:

The real purpose of the proceedings in the case of Prof. Briggs, is aptly stated by Col. McCook, is to enforce a contract, or to determine whether the contract has been maintained in all its integrity. This point has been evaded and ignored on the Briggs side of the controversy from the start. The country has listened to the defenders of the distinguished clergyman only to be told that he was being prosecuted like a criminal, when in fact there is no justification for such a view. He is in the service of the Presbyterian Church, employed to do certain things in a certain way, and it is contended that he has not lived up to the terms and conditions of the contract. When he assumed the position he agreed to teach the doctrines of the organization that gave it to him, and it is insisted that he has not done so, but has taken the liberty to substitute his own opinions for given features of the schedule of belief which he promised to uphold and enforce. There is no question about his right to think and speak what he pleases; but there is a question about his right to remain in the service of a Church after he has renounced his allegiance to it in certain particulars, and assumed the privilege of departing from its system of faith and forms of instruction at his own discretion. That is the vital issue in the case, and all other considerations are purely technical and artificial.

It is not necessary to discuss the merits of Prof. Briggs' form of theology, so far as the pending trial is concerned. Granting that his views are sound and wholesome, the fact remains that he is not authorized to teach them as a representative of the Presbyterian Church if they antagonize the doctrines of that Church. He is free to go elsewhere and identify himself with some other religious body, or preach the Gospel as he understands it in an independent way; but he is surely not free to stay where he has ceased to be a full believer, and where he can not consistently and conscientiously perform the work required of him by his contract. The matter is a very simple one when looked at in this light. It does not involve the idea of persecution, but only that of justice and propriety. Prof. Briggs stands in the attitude of trying to compel the Church to accept doctrines and interpretations of Scripture that are contrary to its established creed, and to retain him in its service, notwithstanding his violation of the conditions upon which that service logically depends. It is understood that he does not claim to be in accord with the prevailing Presbyterian faith and sentiment; and is equivalent to an admission that he belongs somewhere else, or, at least, that he is occupying a false position as an accredited teacher of Presbyterian principles and opinions. The people have respect for any man who severs his relations with a religious denomination because he cannot honestly continue to entertain and advocate its doctrines; but when a man asserts the right to be a law unto himself in such case, and yet to maintain those relations, he invites distrust of his motives and forfeits much of the sympathy that he would otherwise receive.

The Atlantic Monthly. This old and long-established favourite is always welcome, and is never disappointing. No other American magazine can be compared with it for variety, solid merit and genuine literary flavour. The June number has less of fiction than usual, but this is more than compensated for, as many will think, by the numerous and admirable short essays that it contains.

The Canadian Magazine: The June number of this recent claimant for popular favour fully maintains the high character of its previous issues. Several of the articles are of distinctly Canadian interest—"The Aorta of North American Commerce" by Chauncey N. Dutton, "Aspects of Lake Ontario" by John Hague, "The Nickel Region of Canada" by H. A. Hilyard and "The Behring Sea Question" by L. A. Lash, Q. C., and all of them are well written and on attractive themes. Mr. Lye has another of his "Tales of Wayside Inns" and two other short stories make up the fiction of the number. The poems are by Duncan Campbell Scott, Arthur J. Stringer, Gertrude Bartlett and Blanche Bishop. The illustrations are very fair, if we except the portraits, which are as bad as they well could be.

Books and Magazines

SISTER CONSTANCE. By K. M. Fitzgerald. Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier. Crown 8vo, cloth.

A story without any startling incidents or profound reflections, but a plain, unvarnished tale, quietly interesting and wholesome withal.

TWENTY MINUTES LATE. By Pansy (Isabella M. Alden). Toronto: Wm. Briggs.

The Pansy stories require no commendation. They are always interesting, wholesome and helpful; and Twenty Minutes Late will be found in no respect unworthy of its popular predecessors.

HENRY CAREW, FLORIST. By J. A. Taylor. Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier. Small Crown 8vo, paper.

A love story, with the uncertainties, disquietudes and perplexities usually incident thereto, but pleasantly told in an easy, straightforward, unpretentious fashion that will commend itself to the sensible reader.

VISITS TO CALVARY. A Series of Sacramental Meditations. By Rev. T. Jeffrey, M.D. Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons.

The author of this volume is Minister of the Caledonian Road Church, Glasgow, and this collection of sermons is published by special request as a memorial of his Ministerial Jubilee. The very appearance of the book invites to perusal, and in the matter of it the reader finds an abundant reward.

INDUCTIVE STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS. Wilbert W. White. Chicago: Young Men's Era Publishing Company. 1893.

The title of this little book indicates its scope and character. It is, we are told, "the outcome of two ten-day courses of Bible study at the Lake Geneva (Wisconsin) College Student Conferences of the Summer of 1892," and will doubtless prove exceedingly helpful to Bible-class teachers and Bible students generally.

FISHIN' JIMMY, and other Stories. By Annie Trumbull Slosson and Imogen Clark. Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier.

No. 7 of the publishers' handy "Pocket Novels" contains three capital short stories, "Fishin' Jimmy," "The Las' Day," and "Aunt Liefy," adorned with numerous striking but rather weird looking illustrations. The size and shape of these novels make them admirably adapted as companions for holiday excursions.

HIRAM GOLF'S RELIGION; or, THE SHOEMAKER BY THE GRACE OF GOD. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company.

This anonymous little work is well printed and very tastefully bound; and it has what we too seldom find in so-called religious books—a distinct literary flavour. Hiram Golf's life was hard and humble, but it was happy, and the account of his religion here presented is full of lessons for the pew and hints for the pulpit. It is a simple, earnest and exceedingly attractive presentation of the Christian life. The book abounds in bright, crisp, quotable sentences, and within its pretty covers may be found suggestive topics for a score of practical sermons.

AFLOAT FOR ETERNITY: A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS FOR THE TIMES. By Jas. B. Kennedy, B.A. Toronto: William Briggs.

Mr. Kennedy has been fairly successful in applying Bunyan's methods to the conditions of modern life, and this account of the ship "Ever-Onward" with its aptly-named crew and passengers on its eventful voyage to the Port of Eternity, deserves to have a large and appreciative circle of readers. Messrs. Hunter and Crossley, who furnish a brief introduction to the work, say: "No person can tell from reading the book to what

Church the author belongs, though some might think that the character, "Mr. Holdfast," leaned a little towards Calvinism, and attempted to solve some few questions that are inexplicable.

PEOPLE'S DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE. Describing Persons, Places, Countries, Customs, Birds, Animals, Trees, Plants, Books, Events, and many other things in Holy Scripture. Edited by E. W. Rice, D.D. Philadelphia: The American Sunday School Union.

A compact, handy, concise, and inexpensive Bible dictionary for the Sunday school scholar and teacher, the Bible student and the household, has long been needed, and this volume of some 220 pages. The price 25c, brings it within the reach of everyone who requires such an aid for the more intelligent study of the Bible.

ONTARIO'S PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS; or, A CENTURY OF LEGISLATION. 1792-1892. A historical sketch by Frank Yeigh. Illustrated. 10. onto: The Williamson Book Company (Ltd.). 1893.

We cordially welcome Mr. Yeigh's useful and interesting contribution to the historical literature of Canada, and regret that the demands on our space will not permit us to give it the extended and critical notice it deserves. Since it to say that Mr. Yeigh has given us a bright, readable and authentic account of the various homes of our Legislature from the rude structure at Niagara, in which the first Parliament of Upper Canada assembled in September, 1792, to the magnificent pile in Queen's Park, in which the Ontario Assembly has recently, for the first time, conducted its deliberations. We may add that the book is embellished with handsome photogravure portraits and numerous other illustrations.

CAMPAIGN ECHOES. The Autobiography of Mrs. Letitia Youmans. Introduction by Miss Frances E. Willard. Toronto: William Briggs.

This compact volume of over 300 pages should be in the hands of every temperance worker in the Dominion. Mrs. Youmans' long, earnest and unremitting labours for the suppression of intemperance and the promotion of temperance legislation, are more or less known to most of our readers; her voice has been heard in every Province of the Dominion, in many States of the Union and in the principal cities of Great Britain. Seized, some five years ago, with inflammatory rheumatism, she is now a helpless invalid, deprived of the use of her limbs and confined to her bed. Unable to use a pen she has, at the invitation of the White Ribbon Women of Canada, dictated this interesting story of her useful, self-sacrificing life, the sale of which, it is hoped, will provide a maintenance for her declining years.

The June Century is a magnificent number in letter-press and illustrations. We can only name a few of the prominent features at this time. Probably the paper of most general interest is the record by Jonas Stalling, a Swede, of his experience "With Tolstoy in the Russian Famine," in which the reader obtains a graphic idea of the condition of the Russian peasantry, of the difficulties with which Tolstoy had to deal, and of other phases of Russian life now attracting so much attention in various countries. "The Death of the Prince Imperial," by Archibald Forbes, gives new materials relating to this event, about which the great war correspondent writes most graphically. "Writing to Rosina," by William Henry Bishop, is concluded. In the editorial department are an article commending the project of a national board of health, and giving suggestions regarding it, a discussion of the question, "Has Gold Appreciated in Value?" and a second article on "The Disappearance of the Apprentice System," which presents a striking, not to say surprising, state of affairs among the labour-unions. In "Open Letters" are articles relating to "Women's Work and Wages," to the education of "Specialists in Church Music," and to "The Australian Registry of Land Titles," on which subject Prof. T. Stuart Patterson replies to Mr. Edward Atkinson, who makes a brief rejoinder. There are several poems in this number, all of a high order of merit.