

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS.

pect that all old friends and many new friends will rally to the support of this branch of the Church's work." Let the Church now by its deeds justify this expectation. There is not a member of the Church but believes in Home Missions; well, this is Home Mission work, and every argument that can be urged on its behalf applies with equal weight on behalf of Augmentation. There can be no doubt on this point.

What does the Augmentation Committee do? Every year it takes off the hands of the Home Mission Committee proper, some fifteen or twenty mission fields that have been nursed up to the point of needing the entire services of a settled minister whom they are as yet unable to maintain alone. They are just coming to the birth as organized congregations, and now is their time of need. It is the work of this committee to come in at this critical point with words of cheer and strong arms to help. Hundreds of congregations because of assistance rendered them at this stage, are to-day strong and helping others, which, but for this assistance, would have died or been still poor, weak starvings. No one who knows the facts doubts this.

What are some of the facts? In 1883 this Committee took into its care 90 weak congregations; and since then 190 or 200 more. Since 1883 by the help of this fund 250 congregations at least have been helped to become self-sustaining. The 411 congregations which, during the past 12 years, have been or are still being helped by the Augmentation fund, are now returning to the Church in support of its schemes \$20,000 annually. On the simplest business principles, to say nothing of the Christian duty and privilege of the strong to help the weak, this fund is returning ample interest to the Church. In our great North-west and British Columbia, out of 60 congregations which since 1883 have been helped by this fund, 40 are now self-sustaining. Into the new settlements in Ontario, and among the few and scattered Protestant Christians in Quebec, all but submerged by Romanism, it carries the same beneficent ministry and lends its strong helping hand. The question naturally rises in the mind, how could our Church have done, what would it have been, without it? If we love our Church, if we love our Master and our Master's cause, and would have it advance in the future as in the past, let this fund have generous support.

Lukewarmness in its support, and even prejudice against it, have existed in some quarters because of alleged mistakes in its administration. Granted. The committee does not claim to be infallible. The difficulties in its working have been many, but be it observed they have been due chiefly to the action of Presbyteries. But is there a single fund of the Church, or a single member of it who, during the last twelve years, have made no mistakes? Then why withhold support from the Augmentation Fund on this ground. Increased experience has every year been lessening the danger and diminishing the number of what have been considered to be defects in its administration, and by calling in the help of Synods as well as Presbyteries to this end, they have been reduced, we believe, to a minimum.

The claims of this fund to support are, we think, both many, and obvious, and strong. There is at present an argument in its behalf of a personal kind which we do not feel it unbecoming in the circumstances to urge and urge strongly. The continued illness of the brother beloved by the whole Church, whose courageous heart and indefatigable labors have done so much for this fund, is to all a source of deep grief. His eloquent voice on its behalf and strong personality are much missed. It has been largely owing to his efforts and contagious enthusiasm that it has accomplished so much for the Church, that many congregations are now strong which would otherwise have been weak or dead. This scheme has for years been pre-eminently his own because it appears to us it is so like himself, generous, unselfish and helpful to the weak. Would it not be a becoming thing for the Church at large, a tribute of respect to him, of appreciation of his past labors, a mark of the Church's sympathy and love for him, so well deserved, to make this part of her work for his sake and his Master's sake, whom, in it, as in so many other ways, he has served so long and faithfully, a triumphant success, and so carry to him in his sick-room good cheer and to his heart great gladness?

THIS is the season at which most congregations make up their annual balance sheet, review the work of the past year and take an outlook upon the prospects for that which is to come. To many it is a season of much anxiety. Last Wednesday evening a large number of the city churches held their annual meetings, and the publication of their reports furnishes food for reflection and an occasion for remark.

The first thing which strikes the attention in the reports published is the deep and widespread interest, growing steadily it would appear, in congregational work and in the Church's work. This is evinced by the all but uniform statement made of a large attendance at these annual meetings. This is a most hopeful and encouraging sign. It is very gratifying also to observe that, in the case of almost every congregation, an increase of membership, and at the communion in some cases quite marked, is reported. The large membership of many of the city churches is a noticeable feature of the reports. It is all the more so because of the still depressed condition of the city in many respects. It indicates, we think, much faithful work being done by pastors, officebearers and parents by which this growth is brought about.

No one also can help noticing the many and varied forms of Christian work and philanthropy carried on in connection more or less with all the churches in the form of mission Sunday schools mission halls, visiting and relieving the poor. The man who charges the Church with indifference to or neglect of the poor speaks in ignorance of what is being done in this direction. We should like to know of any organization whose efforts in this respect can be compared with those of the Christian Church. Societies for the promotion of Christian life in all its aspects are a prominent feature of the churches and of our time. The very full reports on all these subjects placed before the congregations are most interesting. Their fulness leaves nothing to be desired; there is no concealment, no shirking of or shrinking from what may be unfavourable, or indicate decline or failure in any direction. The harmony in all the meetings also shows that the brethren in the various congregations are dwelling together in love and unity. Serving of simple refreshments at these meetings prevails in many churches and gives opportunity for showing and promoting Christian sociality and good feeling.

The financial aspect of these meetings is naturally a most important one. It is gratifying that, while in Toronto, as in many other cities, the past year has been one of depression in business of many kinds, and consequent slackness of work, the reports financially are so satisfactory. In many cases income has been equal to expenditure or left a balance on the right side, and where it has been on the wrong one, there has been generally a good reason to give for it, showing no falling off of interest or liberality. Even where indebtedness is quite large, there is no faint-heartedness or lack of courage and hope. Many have sought and been able to consolidate their debts at a low rate of increase and thus obtain relief. Many people to keep up the services of their respective churches must have shown a liberal spirit, and, in not a few cases, much self-denial. Even in cases where there are heavy mortgages and large accounts to meet for running expenses, the contributions to the benevolent and missionary schemes of the Church have either not fallen off or have increased. At the same time these large debts are found oppressive burdens, to be relieved of them would be a great deliverance, and but for them, how much more might and would these churches do for the spread and building up of the Church at home and abroad.

The training given to the young people of the Church in their various societies and Sabbath schools, in the grace of liberality, is beginning to tell and will tell more and more in the future. No one need be, no one that we know is discouraged by the outlook. Taking all things into consideration the close of the congregational year is hopeful and encouraging. Let us honour God with our substance, let all try to come nearer to the mark of which it can be said, "We have done what we could." The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad; He hath blessed us; He will bless us still. Let all our congregations enter heartily upon another year of grateful loving service asking out of full hearts, "What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits?"

Books and Magazines.

AND PETER, and other sermons. By Rev. J. Wilbur, D.D., author of "The Ivory Palaces," etc. Fleming H. Revell Company, Toronto.

The writer of the little book with this quaint title is a well-known religious writer and worker. The title of the book is the subject of one of the sermons, and is given it because Peter is such a favorite with the author. It consists of eight sermons, all fresh in their treatment, full of suggestion and apt illustration, will be much enjoyed by all who read them, and especially helpful to ministers to keep them out of ruts.

THE BLESSING OF CHEERFULNESS. By J. R. Miller, D.D., author of "Secrets of Happy Home Life," "Silent Times," etc. Hodder & Stoughton, London; Fleming H. Revell Company, Toronto.

The name of Rev. Dr. Miller as a writer on subjects of practical religion is familiar to all who take interest in such subjects. This is a very neat, attractive booklet on an important subject, and this, the style of treatment and external appearance all commend it to the reader.

The new *Frank Leslie's Pleasant Hours for Boys and Girls* improves with every number. That for February is the best yet; it is full of good things for young people. An article that every reader of juvenile literature will enjoy is "Favorite Story-writers for Young People," in which are described the methods of work of Oliver Optic, Edward S. Ellis, Nora Perry, J. T. Townbridge and Susan Coolidge; finely illustrated with their latest portraits. It is the first of a series of papers on the subject. Then there is an article on "Costumes for a Fancy Dress Party"; an entertaining chat about chameleons; several short stories; the continuation of the two serials by Edward S. Ellis and Jeannette H. Walworth; a story for the little folks; the editor's talks about the new books for boys and girls; and a number of puzzles, for the solution of which a prize of \$5 is offered.

The late Dr. Jowett is reported to have once said to Mrs. Humphry Ward: "We shall come in the future to teach almost entirely by biography. We shall begin with the life that is most familiar to us, 'The Life of Christ,' and we shall more and more put before our children the great examples of persons' lives so that they shall have from the beginning heroes and friends in their thoughts." The editors of *McClure's Magazine* thoroughly agree with Dr. Jowett. It has been, for a long time, their great desire to publish a "Life of Christ" which shall be, to quote Mr. Hall Caine's words in the December issue, "as vivid and as personal from the standpoint of belief as Renan's was from the standpoint of unbelief." The publication of this departure in magazine literature will begin in the February number of *McClure's*.

Queen's Quarterly Vol. III. No. 3 contains many interesting papers. The first place is given to the beloved late Professor Williamson, LL.D., whose memory will be kept green in *Queen's* for many a year. A suggestive subject and article is "The Influence of Greece upon the Thought, Form and Development of the Jewish Religion." "Are our American Newspapers Degenerating?" is discussed by A. F. Drummond. "Vegetable Physiology;" "Keats, the Poet of beauty;" "The Gods of Greece;" "Classical Notes" by Professor Date; "Book Reviews;" and "Current Events," interestingly discussed by the well-known faculty of G conclude a very interesting number. [Box A., Queen's University, Kingston, Ont.]

Massey's Magazine is a new candidate and venture in the Canadian literary world. We wish it success. Its first article is by the well-known contributor Professor Wm. Clark, D.O.L., on "The Cathedral of Christ's Church, Canterbury" illustrated. Following it are "The Evolution of Two of my Pictures;" "The Singer of Tantramar;" by Pauline Johnston, "Shakespeare's Tragedies—I., Macbeth" is a psychological study. An account is given of the "New Canadian Ship Canal at Sault Ste Marie" with illustrations. "Outing and Recreation," "Woman's Realm," and "The Literary Kingdom, with Current Comment are the leading features of this first number. [The Massey Press, Toronto, Canada.]

A poem by Arthur Sherborne Hardy, "The City of Dreams," opens the January *Cosmopolitan*. Its illustrations are as usual admirable in every way. Some of its leading articles are "Coasting down some Great Mountains;" "Amateur Photography of To-day;" "Butterflies, a Tale of Nature;" "Submarine Boats;" "A Brief History of Altruria;" "A Tragedy of the Great North Road;" with a coloured frontispiece illustration, recalling the olden times. Other and lighter articles lend variety to this excellent and wonderfully cheap monthly. [The Cosmopolitan, Irvington-on-the-Hudson, New York, U.S.]

The Lee family of Virginia is the subject of a series of profusely illustrated articles which will constitute a leading feature in *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* during the current year. The February number of this magazine contains the initial article of the series, entitled "The Ancestors of General Robert E. Lee, and the Times in which They Lived." This number also contains beautifully illustrated articles upon "A Roman Festa," "The Social Settlement in America," "West Point," "Art Students in Paris," and stories, sketches and poems by popular contributors.

"A Mother's Book of Lullabies" is a collection of five songs by Eugene Field including: "Cornish Lullaby," "Mediaeval Eventide," "Dewdrops and the Rose," "Dutch Lullaby," "Old English Lullaby," set to music by D. B. Gillette, Jr. The book is from the press of Wm. A. Pond and Co., Music Publishers, 25 Union Square, New York.