

legends of Santa Claus, yet they share in the prevalent joy that overspreads the lands. They, like to see the young enjoying all the innocent happiness that comes to their share. There are those, too, from whom many of their joys have fled, whose earthly life is shaded with sorrow, who can yet rejoice with them that do rejoice, who see in the return of Christmas the renewal of the perpetual hope that Christ gives to His children. The occasions of universal joy are all too few in this work-a-day world for any to despise the gracious opportunity that Christmas brings.

Time was, and not so very long ago, that, outside Episcopal Churches, Christmas was but little regarded. There is no New Testament authority for the religious observance of the day. Traces of its presence are not found in the historical fragments that have come down from the post-apostolic Church. Not until well on in the fourth Christian century do we find evidences that Christ's birthday was observed. Owing to the dissensions between the Christians of the East and their brethren in the West, there was no definite understanding as to the exact date, and different days were held by the disputants. There is, therefore, no divine warrant for its observance as a day of religious worship. It is natural to resent its imposition by ecclesiastical authority, but when that is said there need be no serious objection to any body of Christians meeting on the 25th of December for the purpose of joining in devout thanksgiving to God for His unspeakable Gift. It would be strange indeed if on the day that recalls the memory of the most joyous event in the history of time, the Saviour's advent, thoughts of Him should not predominate in every Christian heart. Such recollections exalt the joys of the season, and impart to them their deepest significance.

And then the family reunions the day brings about. The good house-mother has been looking forward to the return of her boys and girls, whose business or the prosecution of their studies has necessitated their departure from home. Her preparations and plans have been matured for weeks in advance, and selfish indeed must be the heart that would treat parental affection lightly. So home, always a bright spot on earth, is usually at its brightest on Christmas Day. May there be joy and gladness in all the homes into which THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN enters, and in all others besides. May the benediction breathed in the advent song of the angels soon find an echo in all hearts

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

IT is a significant fact, a sign of the times, that while here in Canada as yet we are not menacingly confronted with the evils that are crying for redress in older lands, and in the great cities of this continent, thoughtful men are turning their attention to social questions that are rousing interest everywhere. We may not have in Canada the appalling sights that are to be seen in all large continental cities, the laziness, the destitution and the crime that obtrude themselves on the public gaze, but such things are here in germ. In Montreal, Toronto and even in smaller places, the veritable representatives of the "submerged tenth" are to be found. In the two great Canadian commercial cities named there are localities into which ordinary citizens would hesitate to enter unprotected. All the conditions that tend to foster social cankers are to be found in our Canadian civilization. The same political and social evils that prevail elsewhere are believed in and followed. There is the same eager pursuit of wealth irrespective of consequences that pervades the entire commercial and industrial world. In due time the tree will be known by its fruits.

Has the Church of Jesus Christ a direct relation to the vital questions that emerge from existing social conditions? To this enquiry two directly opposed answers are given. Some say, emphatically, yes; others no less emphatically say no. The ground on which the latter rest is that the message of salvation, Christ and Him crucified, is the one legitimate theme for the Christian pulpit. Proclaim the divine justice, mercy and love with earnestness and fidelity. These truths believed and acted upon will transform men individually and through them mould and uplift society. Some hold that the attitude of the Christian minister of to-day in relation to pressing social questions should be the same as that occupied by the Saviour when asked by the man to speak to his brother respecting the division of an inheritance. The infinitely wise and loving Saviour who healed all manner of diseases is not indifferent to any form of human misery. For the wisest of all reasons

He declined to interfere for the adjustment of the brothers' difference, taking the occasion to teach an impressive lesson of the supreme importance of spiritual things.

Some Christian ministers may be influenced by subordinate considerations in choosing for purposes of attraction their pulpit themes from the events of the day, but such preaching has small motive power. Generally the deliverances of the sensational pulpit have little effect in the solution of questions of great public importance. When earnest men, not open to the charge of sensational preaching, take up the social questions stirring the popular mind, it is evident that they feel impelled to do so from a sense of duty. In this they are not without justification. The prophetic office, as it existed in the Old Testament Church, was exercised in preaching to the times. The evils prevalent in the Hebrew nation, some of them not essentially different from those of our own time, were depicted and denounced in words of burning indignation by inspired speakers. Did not the meek and lowly Saviour lay bare the sins of the Pharisees with a directness that could come only from Him who knew what was in man? As there are in the Christian Church diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, there is abundant room as there is need for the faithful and earnest exercise of them all. Let the gospel of love be proclaimed in all its fulness and power, and let those with the spirit of the old prophets cry aloud and spare not in their denunciation of whatever in our modern civilization is making for unrighteousness.

It means something when distinguished Episcopal prelates both in Europe and America, no less than prominent ministers of other communions, are endeavouring to set our industrial and economic relations in the light of Christ's teaching. Last week the daily papers gave an outline of a sermon by a young Anglican clergyman in Toronto, in which there was direct and forcible speaking on the relations of capital and labour, the evils of competition and the need for new social adjustments. It is the more noteworthy that this discourse was delivered in a church where it is understood the ecclesiastical atmosphere is impregnated with High Churchism. The Rev. E. A. Oliver, the preacher referred to, is spoken of as an earnest and devout young man. He was recently in England, and the social degradation he witnessed in congested centres there has evidently made a deep impression upon his mind. In seeking to prevent the spread of a similar state of things here he suggests a number of thoughts calling for serious reflection. The light in which he presented the truths referred to was clear and distinct, though not strikingly original. The novelty is in the quarter whence they emanate. In England the Anglican Church is giving earnest heed to existing social problems. While not alone in this, it is evident that the Church that keeps in touch with the masses will be able to wield an influence for good which those who stand aloof will seek for in vain. In the days of Christ's personal ministry on earth the common people heard Him gladly; there is no reason why it should be otherwise now.

On the same Sabbath the Rev. J. Burton, B.D., of the Northern Congregational Church, Toronto, also called attention in a thoughtful discourse to the subject. Mr. Burton paid a visit to Europe recently and, as is the case with most earnest and reflecting men, the Condition-of-England Question, as Carlyle put it long ago, had a marvellous fascination for him. In his discourse bearing on the question he corrected an impression some seem to entertain that the scheme projected by General Booth is something entirely new. The novelty in the plan proposed by the leader of the Salvation Army consists mostly in the magnitude of the undertaking and the concentration of effort by which it is designed to be carried out. Though the means employed by the Churches and philanthropic agencies have been inadequate, entire neglect of the destitute is not justly chargeable. Of late years much effort has been expended, and large sums have been contributed for rescue work not only in the east of London, but in all the congested districts of large cities. These endeavours have not been in vain. Many can bear testimony to the fact that both materially and spiritually they have been brought out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay and their feet set upon a rock. Great and self-denying as these endeavours have been, they are far from commensurate with the actual needs of the case. They have been like a great vessel that has sprung a leak. The pumps have been manned, but the waters have been gaining all the time. It now remains to be seen, since public attention has been aroused, whether the plan of General Booth will be more effective than those that have preceded it.

Books and Magazines.

THE C. P. R. has issued "Good News for Christmas and New Years," an ingenious and neat little form of announcement relating to holiday travel.

THE Christmas number of "Book News," illustrating and describing all the holiday books of the season, is a handsome holiday book in itself, and easily ranks with magazines costing five or six times its little price.

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS (New York edition) ably sustains its splendid reputation as a weekly pictorial chronicle of the events of the week. As usual it publishes a Christmas number with beautifully finished coloured plates.

RAISE THE FLAG AND OTHER PATRIOTIC SONGS AND POEMS. (Toronto: Rose Publishing Co.)—This is a collection of patriotic songs and poems by a number of our most distinguished Canadian poets. It is intended to appeal to and foster a thorough Canadian sentiment. It is neatly presented in a rather florid lithographic cover.

SERMONS IN CANDLES. By C. H. Spurgeon. (London: Passmore & Alabaster; Toronto: The Willard Tract Depository.) A cheap edition in paper covers of the quaint, terse, racy and suggestive little work by Spurgeon which has attained a remarkably large circulation.

THE YOUTH'S COMPANION (Boston) presents its two and a-half million readers with a double Christmas number. It is just out, and contains no less than seven complete stories. As we turn the pages over, and enjoy the feast that lies before us of picture, story, poem and anecdote, we feel that we have been wished at least one "Merry Christmas."

A BOOK covering unusual ground is shortly to appear from the pen of Rev. A. H. Scott, M.A., Perth, through the well-known publishing house of Hart & Co., of Toronto. In "Ten Years in My First Charge," the author is to bring his readers behind the scenes of a checkered but signally honoured ministry. Any young minister who in his first charge brings over 500 new members into fellowship with his Church, and unites in marriage 170 couples, has acquired an experience that arrests attention for the written record of his ministry.

MRS. HENRY WARD BEECHER'S "Reminiscences" of her late husband, which she is now writing, has been purchased by *The Ladies' Home Journal*, of Philadelphia, and the articles will shortly begin in that periodical. The series will have for its title "Mr. Beecher as I Knew Him," and will cover the entire period of his fifty-seven years of married life, from young Beecher's first acquaintance with his wife, his college life, their courtship and marriage, his first public speech, the first year of married life with an income of \$300, and so all through the great preacher's life until his later triumphs, his last sickness and days, and his death.

THE SUNNY SIDE OF BEHAVEMENT. As illustrated in Tenneyson's "In Memoriam." By Rev. Charles E. Cooledge. (Boston: J. G. Cupples Co.)—This is a neat and tender analysis of "In Memoriam" in which the comfort and consolation pervading one of the most unique productions of the Poet Laureate's genius is presented in clear and consecutive form. The Bereavement, Grief and Despair, Will-o'-the-Wisp Lights, the Lesser Lights, the Great Lights, Comfort, Resignation and Peace are the topics illustrated. The brochure is a model of neatness and is very suitable for those who have passed beneath the shadow of bereavement.

A. M. MACKAY, Pioneer Missionary of the Church Missionary Society to Uganda. By his Sister. With portrait and map. Author's Edition. (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son; Toronto: The Willard Tract Depository.)—The life story of this heroic man and devoted Christian missionary is admirably told in this most interesting volume. It will take its place in the growing circle of missionary classics, ranking with the narratives of Williams and Moffat, Duff and Paton. The life of the man who has been fitly styled the "St. Paul of Uganda" is for the most part told in selections from his own letters and journals. The volume has been prepared with the utmost good taste by the hands of an affectionate sister. It will be read with intense interest and much profit. Though the voice of Mackay of Uganda is silent on earth his earnest words and example will plead eloquently for the evangelization of the Dark Continent.

THE METHODIST MAGAZINE. (Toronto: William Briggs.)—The closing number of volume thirty-two has quite a Christmas flavour from the illustrated articles, poems and sketches, referring to this "gracious season." Mr. Algernon Blackwood contributes an interesting article on "Christmas in England." The Editor has an illustrated article demonstrating the superior advantage of Canada over any country in the world. Professor A. P. Colman, Ph.D., has an admirable article on "Norway and Its People." The fascinating story of Lady Brassey's "Last Voyage" comes to its tragic close, and the Editor adds a postscript on her death on board the *Sunbeam* and burial at sea. All the above are well illustrated. The magazine for 1891 will be enlarged by 100 pages to make room for a new department on "Popular Science." It will also have more and better illustrations than ever of Bible lands, on tourist travel in Eastern Europe—Hungary, Transylvania, etc. A strong feature will be a series of papers on "The Poets of Canada," by the Rev. M. R. Knight, of New Brunswick, himself one of our sweetest singers.

PINE, ROSE AND FLEUR DE LIS. By S. Frances Harrison (Seranus). (Toronto: Hart & Co.)—This volume of verse, by Mrs. Harrison (Seranus), contains a section of great interest to all classes of readers, mainly descriptive of French Canada, and very fitly, therefore, modelled upon the old French forms, among which are forty original villanelles. These carefully executed little poems deal with phases of picturesque French Canadian life on the Raft, in the Chantiers, on the Highroads and in the Villages, and are greatly enhanced by the occasional judicious use of musical motives, taken from the primitive chansons current among the habitants. The whole forms one of the most unique contributions to literature that the season of 1890 has seen. The remainder of the book is divided into equally interesting sections, dealing, not alone with Canadian subjects, but with Foreign and English phases of life. The book is beautifully printed on fine laid paper specially made, with a new French face type. The binding is novel and the design on side and back unique.