

Pew and Pulpit in Toronto.—XVIII.*

AT THE METROPOLITAN METHODIST CHURCH.

SUNDAY morning the thirteenth of October seemed to extend an invitation to people to turn their footsteps to the House of God. The autumn sunshine with all the glory, but scarcely the ardent glow of previous months, poured down out of a sky of clearest blue on Toronto's unparalleled avenues, bordered with their splendours of changing foliage. The chestnut burr fell pattering to the sidewalk, and, bursting, the brown and glossy nut ricocheted merrily over the pavement or planks. The air was delightfully balmy, yet crisp; it was neither too warm nor too cold. It was no wonder that what time the church bells filled the air, a multitude of people in their go-to-meeting clothes crowded the streets leading to popular tabernacles. When I got to Church Street, a thoroughfare the name of which seemed quite appropriate, I found myself in the midst of a stream of people who were going towards the Metropolitan Church. It was evidently worth the while of a student of the church services of Toronto to join them in a visit to a building so evidently popular had there not been the history and prestige of that church to urge his going. And not only were there pedestrians, but more than two or three smart carriages and pairs dashed up in approved style—harness shining and chains rattling—and deposited their occupants at one of the gates of the church grounds. Very beautiful that ample expanse of turf and walks and shrubbery looked in the bright sunlight. The church has the advantage of standing in the midst of a magnificent square, the value of which, from a real estate point of view, must be very great, but which, in that position, is most precious as a breathing place and lung. How green and smooth the turf looked! The flowers of course were mostly over, so the ornamental beds were not very attractive, but they had been, in their season, a suitable adornment of what I must perforce regard as the finest site for a city church I know of. One stands on the wide plateau of painted wooden slats in front of the church, elevated a few steps above the ground, and looks over a spacious garden which seems to keep the city at a distance. The building itself is a notable example of church architecture in the gothic style, and its tower and many pinnacles and finials give importance and conspicuousness to a fine and important specimen of church building, while the spacious school rooms and other church offices to the north of it give an air of imposing completeness to the costly and commodious pile. The interior of the church is very comfortable and pleasing. The light comes gently through the stained glass of the pointed arch windows, the aisles are softly carpeted, the pews are upholstered in crimson cloth, the backs of them being also covered with that material, so that despite its great spaciousness it looks just the church for a cold Canadian winter day. As you sit in the centre of the body of the church you cannot fail to be impressed with the architectural beauty of the interior. Before you—above the preaching platform, a well-designed piece of woodwork quite in harmony with the building—is a large and very ornate organ. But it does not, like some church organs in Methodist and Presbyterian churches, look too large for the church. Its comparative unobtrusiveness is helped by the neat and tasteful character of its decoration which is entirely in harmony with that of the general interior, combining, as it does, the softest and most gently blended drabs, greys and pinks, with a use of ornament which gives an effect of richness without gaudiness. Instead of being richly gilt and standing out in a striking glory of aureotint, its pipes are diapered in neutral tints and stencil work, and so

is its front. The larger groups of pipes terminate above in small pinnacle roofs carried on diminutive pillars, as if the instrument were actually a building within a building, to be looked at as a separate architectural construction. At the base of the organ there is a gallery, which, on Sunday last, contained no fewer than sixty choristers, the sex being about equally divided. In the centre is a screen of gothic woodwork which somewhat hides Mr. Torrington, the well-known organist, from the view of the congregation. Large and deep galleries are on the sides and end of the church. The central ceiling is of the form of a pointed arch, and is carried on slender iron columns with ornamented gothic capitals. The groining over the galleries is very beautifully designed, giving a series of pointed arches on either side. On both sides of the organ the end walls are decorated with fine frescoes of angels bringing crowns or blowing praiseful trumpets. Around the arch above the organ goes a conspicuous inscription. Angels find places too in various points of the soaring curves of the roof, and the whole scheme of decoration has been carefully thought out and exceedingly well executed. From all this it will be gathered that the Metropolitan is an ornate and beautiful church. It is a sort of cathedral of Methodism. I do not know what John Wesley would say to it, but I cannot help thinking that he would be very much astonished at it if he could see it.

There are always two ministers at the Metropolitan church, Mr. Torrington at the organ board being one, and the minister who occupies the pulpit being the other. Mr. Torrington may be called the permanent vicar-choral of this ecclesiastical establishment. His choir is under his perfect control, he has imbued it with his spirit, and it forms an important and integral part of the church organization. Its ministrations balance those of the pulpit. A minister cannot feel that he has the entire responsibility of the service on his hands when an assembly like Mr. Torrington's choir stands up behind him and begins to sing. The choir in a measure dominates the place, and with the organ, forms a combination that welds the entire service together, though I cannot say that I was struck with any massiveness in the purely congregational part of the singing. It might be that on the day on which I attended the services the hymns did not happen to be calculated to bring out this feature. But the anthems and the solo singing were very impressive and beautiful. This part of the service was a sacred concert, worthy of anybody's attention. It gave one the idea of very considerable musical and vocal gifts consecrated to the service of the sanctuary, and I am of opinion that the excellence with which the choral work is done has much to do in attracting the vast congregation that fills this noble church.

The edifice is too large for anybody to be very conspicuous, but as one looked over the well-filled pews it was easy to recognize a large number of our foremost citizens. The congregation is exceedingly well-behaved, devout and quiet; in its way fashionable, and very correctly dressed. On Sunday morning last the regular minister was not present, his place being taken by Rev. ———. The people crowded in to the music of a pleasing voluntary—very well played—that seemed to get quieter and more placid as the minutes went by. When the minister appeared there was a slight pause, and a verse of the Old Hundredth was rather rapidly performed. Then the whole congregation stood up and sang the Doxology. After this there was a short prayer, and then, I think, we sang a hymn. Mr. ——— is a good reader, with a flexible and pleasant voice, and his reading of the Scriptures showed the meaning of the words. I may say that the introductory invocation was followed by the Lord's Prayer, repeated by the entire congregation, and that the second reading of the Scriptures began with the 46th Psalm, read responsively, verse by verse, alternately by minister and people. An anthem, "God be merciful unto us and bless us," by ——— formed part of the introductory service, and while the collection was being taken up, a soprano solo was sung with much force and expressiveness, by a young lady, her voice easily filling the church, the acoustic properties of which seem to be very good. As the words, "I cling to Thee, my Saviour," came again and again into the stream of the sacred song, one thought that it was the voice of a soul trilling forth to exquisite music its most intimate spiritual experiences. The piety of the utterance gave it an impersonality that lifted it above the

* The articles which have already appeared in this series are :— I. Sherbourne Street Methodist Church, Feb. 22nd. II. The Jews' Synagogue, March 1st. III. A proposed visit that was stopped by fire, March 8th. IV. The Roman Catholic Cathedral, March 15th. V. St. James' Cathedral, March 22nd. VI. The Bond Street Congregational Church, March 29th. VII. Jarvis Street Baptist Church, April 5th. VIII. St. James Square Presbyterian Church, April 12th. IX. At the Church of St. Simon the Apostle, April 19th. X. Rev. W. F. Wilson at Trinity Methodist Church, April 26th. XI. Rev. Wm. Patterson at Cooke's Church, May 3rd. XII. St. Peter's Church, Carlton Street, May 10th. XIII. At the Friends' Meeting House, May 17th. XIV. At the Unitarian Church, Jarvis Street, May 24th. XV. At Holy Trinity Church, May 31st. XVI. At St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Jarvis Street, Sept 27th. XVII. At St. Paul's Anglican Church, Bloor Street East, Oct. 4th.