

spontaneously bespeak. His physical health at the present time is by no means robust. He is just the kind of man to have a large amount of extraneous work of a public nature thrust upon him. To undertake such, even beyond his ability, would, so far as inclination goes, be deemed no hardship by him. He is devoted to his work, but in the interests of the college and for his own sake it is desirable that as little pressure as possible should be put upon him to engage in work outside his own special sphere, which, until he fully regains his health, will be amply sufficient for his energies.

The inaugural lecture was a massive and compact elucidation of the great and important subject with which in his ordinary work Professor Thomson will have specially to deal. The propriety of selecting such a subject and its mode of treatment was remarked upon, some considering that it was rather abstruse for a promiscuous audience. There is room for difference of opinion on this point, but one thing is certain that in dealing with his subject as he did the new professor was at his best. After all, may it not be good even for a promiscuous audience once in a while to come in contact with robust, vigorous and sustained thought on questions of the highest philosophic and scientific interest? The audience, however, was not so very promiscuous after all. The large number of ministerial brethren, many of them from a distance, would be able to follow with keen appreciation the masterly and logical sequence of thought with which the lecturer advanced his powerful argument. Without affectation the audience can be described as a representative one, and those composing it are more or less accustomed to consecutive thought that they could not fail to follow the line so undeviatingly pursued by the lecturer. The style of the lecture was in harmony with the theme and its mode of treatment. It is appropriate, concise and lucid. There is no indulging in the jargon of the schools, no unnecessary employment of technical phraseology to make a show of learning, no redundancy of expression. In a remarkable degree Professor Thomson is not only endowed with the capacity for strong thinking, he is equally gifted with an adequate and power of appropriate expression, eminently fitting him for the important chair he has been appointed to fill. Knox College and the Church generally are to be congratulated that the services of Professor Thomson have been recognized and secured. The well-wishes for his success are general and hearty.

DOES IT PAY TO BE IMMORAL?

A GREAT crime attracts of necessity a large degree of human interest. The trial concluded at Woodstock of the unfortunate young man who was found guilty of a cruel and heartless murder has aroused everywhere more than ordinary interest. This is due to the social position of the criminal and his victim, and also to the peculiar circumstances in which the crime was committed. A young man was decoyed from England by gross misrepresentation and direct falsehood. It was represented to him by young Birchall that the latter was possessed of valuable farms, and that the two should go into partnership. No such farms existed. The fraud was on the eve of discovery and the duped Benwell is taken ostensibly on a visit to one of the alleged farms but in reality to the Blenheim swamp where a few days afterwards the body was found with two fatal bullet wounds in the skull. The details are familiar, having been gone over again and again in the investigations held and in all their fulness at the trial.

The court proceedings at Woodstock reflect credit on the administration of justice in Canada. The promptitude with which Birchall was put on trial and the manner in which the entire proceedings were conducted are creditable to all concerned. The Spring Assizes were held too early to admit of the case going to trial then, and in this the prisoner gained rather than lost. The excitement in the locality and indeed all over the country was so great that it is possible the accused would not have received the just consideration that was his due. The interval gave time for the subsidence of excited feeling and afforded an opportunity of approaching the case in a spirit of judicial calmness. The entire conduct of the case has evoked expressions of approval from the British and United States press which seem both reasonable and just. The proceedings contrast favourably with the uncertainty that so often attends similar judicial trials in the Republic. The selection of a jury was of the utmost importance. The right of challenge was freely exercised yet there was no waste of time. Forty minutes sufficed for a satisfactory completion of the

panel. The judge presided with the dignity the occasion demanded and was scrupulously careful that the accused should have all the advantages the law allowed. He appealed more than once to the jurymen's sense of fair-play and to the heavy responsibility that rested on them. In his summing up of the evidence he was conspicuously fair and impartial. The counsel for the crown marshalled with singular lucidity the terrible array of facts that pointed so conclusively to the guilt of the accused, but he showed no desire to deal unfairly with the evidence presented, and he never pressed unduly a point concerning which there was room for reasonable doubt. The counsel for the accused had a more difficult task assigned him which he discharged with great ability. There is but one opinion as to the fairness of the trial. Even the condemned man is reported as having expressed himself as satisfied on this point.

Now that the trial is over and the unhappy man's span of life is rapidly nearing its close, he will have an opportunity for reflecting on the course that has led up to so terrible a culmination. In his case it is not so long since life with all its glittering promises and its golden opportunities opened up alluringly before him. He had many advantages. Starting in the race of life he had few of the obstacles that impede the progress of many who have grappled with stern difficulties and been every way the better for the conflict. He had a good home, early educational advantages of a superior kind, a course at Oxford which his own folly prematurely shortened. Family and social advantages which properly appreciated would have been helpful. These were flung away with a careless hand, and he drifts forth as an unprincipled adventurer.

In some quarters it is the fashion to ascribe his conduct to the absence of a moral nature, and tracing his abnormal privation to heredity and environment. To deny that heredity has a powerful and direct influence in the shaping of moral as well as of physical characteristics would be absurd, but it is just possible that too much may be made of heredity and environment. The light it is fitted to give for the guidance of life is of great importance, but it is possible to ascribe more to it than it is capable of accomplishing. When it is pushed to the extreme of superseding moral considerations it is being carried too far. If he is sane, whatever a man owes to heredity or however unfavourable his environment he is still held accountable as a moral agent. The disposition in some quarters is to hold a man irresponsible if his grandfather was a scoundrel or his more immediate ancestors loose livers. It used to be the custom to seek escape from the consequences of transgression by ascribing it to Satanic agency. With some it is the custom to put heredity and environment in the place of the Evil One, and reduce the man of criminal inclinations and habits to a condition of moral irresponsibility. Whatever the source of incitements to evil, man is held responsible for his actions. To the apostolic statement there is no exception: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." In this state of probation the Maker of man has provided the means for his deliverance from the power of evil, and a pathway for his moral progress is opened up. It is neither true to fact nor Scripture that heredity closes the door against a man's deliverance from the domination of his sinful nature. Nor is it true that heredity cancels moral responsibility. The person who pleads heredity as an excuse for wrong actions is presumably one who wills to do evil. If Birchall's unhappy career is employed for the purpose of weakening the sense of moral responsibility, it is a perversion of the lessons his crime is emphatically fitted to teach.

One of the obvious truths the crime and its sequel clearly impress is that crooked ways lead to disaster. The young man lived by his wits, the worst of all possible ways of making a living. The qualities of which he has shown himself possessed properly applied would have enabled him to earn an honest living and occupied an honourable place in society. Instead he chose the slippery path of the characterless adventurer and it has cost him his life. The praise of honest industrious application to legitimate pursuits is not metaphorical but real. In that only can true prosperity and happiness be found. As long, however, as thought, speech and endeavour are saturated with the idea that the acquisition of wealth is the one thing worth living and striving for, men will not be scrupulous in the means employed in gaining what so many believe to be the supreme end of existence in this world. The long line of adventurers will not be closed by the execution of Reginald Birchall.

Books and Magazines.

OUR LITTLE ONES AND THE NURSERY. (Boston: The Russell Publishing Co.)—This most admirable monthly is a great favourite with the little people and deservedly so. It is carefully edited, beautifully illustrated and finely printed.

HARPER'S YOUNG PEOPLE. (New York: Harper & Brothers.)—The weekly issues of this high class periodical supply a plentiful amount of interesting and instructive reading for the wide circle of readers for whose benefit it is specially designed. Its illustrations are numerous and of excellent quality.

ST. NICHOLAS. (New York: The Century Co.)—There are many attractive features in this month's number of *St. Nicholas*. One paper in particular with its illustrations, "Through a Detective Camera," will be certain to secure attention. Descriptive, historical and general papers, well told stories and numerous poems, with numerous and fine illustrations make up an excellent number.

SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.)—The reproduction of Horace's Odes in appropriate English accompanied by fine artistic illustrations is a special feature in Scribner's. This month "The Lover's Quarrel" which serves as frontispiece is a fine piece of work. The principal descriptive illustrated papers in this month's number are: "With a Cable Expedition;" "The City House in the West;" "From Port to Port with the White Squadron;" and "The Lake Country in New England." N. S. Shaler supplies a second paper on "Nature and Man in America," and Mrs. Sylvanus Reed presents her views on "The Private School for Girls." The serial story "Jerry" is continued and there are short stories and poems of decided merit.

HARPER'S MAGAZINE. (New York: Harper & Brothers.)—*Harper's* for October is particularly strong. There is not only great variety in the contents but a number of papers are particularly attractive. "A Moose Bull Fight" serves as frontispiece and an appropriate illustration to the opening paper, "Antoine's Moose Yard," the story of a hunting expedition into the feeding grounds of the Moose, near Crooked Lake, Canada. "New Moneys of Lincoln's Administration;" "Reminiscences of N. P. Willis and Lydia Maria Child;" "The First Oil Well;" "Agricultural Chili;" "Nights at Newstead Abbey" are some of the more notable papers in the number. "Port Tarascon," by Alphonse Daudet, and quite a number of short stories, and poetical contributions add attractiveness to this month's issue.

THE CENTURY. (New York: The Century Co.)—Joseph Jefferson's finely written and most interesting autobiography ends with this month's instalment. Professor Darwin, of Cambridge, England, contributes a scientific paper of great interest on "Meteorites and the History of Stellar Systems." "Prehistoric Cave-Dwellings;" "An Artist's Letters from Japan;" "A Hard Road to Travel out of Dixie;" "Out-of-the-Ways in High Savoy," by Edward Eggleston; "The Women of the French Salons" are all interesting and finely illustrated. Miss Helen Gray Cone writes on "American Women in Literature;" and Henry Cabot Lodge discusses, "Why Patronage in Office is Un-American." Mrs. Amelia Barr's powerful novel "Olivia" is completed and there are two good short stories, several poems and the usual departments that add to the attractiveness of the *Century*.

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.)—The conclusion of Mrs. Deland's "Sidney" occupies the first place in the *Atlantic* for October, and the final chapters have that intensity of feeling which is called forth by the statement of the theory of her story; namely, that love and self sacrifice are the things which alone make life worth having. "Felicia" comes to a climax in the marriage of the heroine with a man, to whose occupation in life both she and all her friends strenuously object. Dr. Holmes' "Over the Teacups" also relates to marrying and giving in marriage; and, moreover, describes a visit to a certain college for women, not a thousand miles from Boston. The first chapters of a forthcoming serial story by Frank Stockton are announced for next month. The other striking papers of the number are a consideration of Henrik Ibsen's life abroad and his later dramas, Mr. Fiske's "Benedict Arnold's Treason," Mr. J. K. Paulding's "A Wandering Scholar of the Sixteenth Century,"—Johannes Butzbach.—Mr. McCracken's account of Altdorf and the open-air legislative assemblies which take place there, and Professor Royce's paper on General Frémont. Miss Jewett's Maine sketch, "By the Morning Boat," and a poem by Miss Thomas on "Sleep," should be especially remembered. The usual Contributors' Club, and several critical articles, one of which is a review of Jules Breton's "La Vie d'un Artiste," complete the issue.

THE MISSIONARY REVIEW OF THE WORLD. (New York: Funk and Wagnall's; Toronto: William Briggs.)—The number for October opens with a scathing article on "Cardinal Lavigerie and his Anti-Slavery Crusade," by Rev. J. C. Braque. Dr. Ellinwood follows with a graphic sketch of a "Foreign Missionary of Old Testament Times." Prof. Hulbert, of Seoul, gives a fascinating and thrillingly interesting story of "The Introduction of Christianity into Korea by Roman Catholic Missionaries," many of whom suffered martyrdom for the faith. "Undenominational Mission Work" is a timely and able presentation of that subject, by Rev. James F. Riggs. "The Prayer for Labourers," by Dr. Pierson, will touch many a heart and ought to evoke much earnest prayer. Dr. Lattie presents cogent reasons to show that the "Results of Modern Missions" will be permanent. That veteran African missionary, Lewis Grout, contributes a valuable article on "Mahdism and Missions in the Soudan." Dr. Starbuck gives us the cream of all the foreign missionary periodicals culled and put into English. Besides these papers in the literature section, we have a highly valuable sketch of "The Foreign Missions of the Moravian Church," and a terse and pretty full description of "Missions and Sects in the Turkish Empire." In addition to all this there is no little correspondence, many striking editorials; also nine pages of General Missionary Intelligence and the latest news from all lands. It is a fresh and grand number, and proves that the cause of missions is alive and progressing the world over.