

fessor of Philosophy.—On Monday the Senate rejected the nomination of Mr. W. B. Hornblower, of New York, to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, by a vote of 30 to 24; 12 Democrats, 15 Republicans, and 3 Populists voted to reject.



The Decline of the American Pulpit

The Rev. G. Monroe Royce has an article with the above title in the January "Forum." He bases his belief that the American pulpit is declining on two considerations: first, that an American Bishop in 1892 referred to the "large and steadily increasing class of persons in Holy Orders" who are not competent for their office; and, second, on statistics showing a falling off in the attendance on theological seminaries, and in the proportion of "trained men"—by which we suppose he means of college and seminary graduates—in the ministry. The second consideration has weight; the first, none—for it indicates nothing more than a decline in the Episcopal pulpit, and, in our judgment, it does not even indicate that. It would be easy to match this Bishop's lament with others from every epoch of the Church—from Savonarola, Luther, Latimer, Cromwell, Wesley, Edwards. The best men always have ideals far above the realities of their age. They lament that the age does not realize these ideals. Such lamentations do not indicate a decay; they only indicate a growth too slow for the impatient desires of the prophets.

We do not believe that the American pulpit was ever as strong as it is to-day; or ever had as potent an influence; or ever possessed so many men of prophetic nature; or ever was more charged with a divine message; or ever spoke so practically, directly, efficiently to the lives and consciences of men. An age which has given a Phillips Brooks to the Episcopal pulpit and a Henry Ward Beecher to the independent pulpit is not an age marked by pulpit decline. For Phillips Brooks and Henry Ward Beecher were both typical men, and, though without peers, were not without disciples, possessed of less ability indeed, but of like spirit—the spirit of prophecy. We resent the cynical declaration that "there seems to be a prevalent notion among the clergy that the chief business of the preacher is to entertain and amuse;" and we wonder where the writer has been to church. Has he listened in Boston to Edward Everett Hale, or George A. Gordon, or E. Winchester Donald; or in New York to John Hall, or Charles H. Parkhurst, or Morgan Dix, or W. R. Rainsford; or in Chicago to Frank W. Gunsaulus, or E. P. Goodwin, or Jenkin Lloyd Jones? We pick almost by chance a few of the typical men of different pulpits, Episcopalian and independent, conservative and radical. Where against these is there one man, of note in the American pulpit, whose attractiveness is his power to "entertain and amuse"? Dr. Talmage? The charge is made against him, but it libels him. Dr. Talmage's methods are open to criticism, as are those of any man whose genius and temperament lead him out of the conventional tracks. But no one who knows him doubts his real earnestness. He is a dramatic preacher, perhaps too dramatic; but not an amusing one.

If Mr. Royce had contented himself with the more sober, if less sensational, declaration that the American ministry does not take full advantage of its opportunity, and is not all that it might be and ought to be, he would have uttered possibly a truism—but there are utterances worse than a truism. The minister ought to be a leader, and if he too often fails in this his highest function, if he ceases to be a prophet and becomes a scribe, the cause of

the failure is not far to seek. In every other department men are incited to be explorers, to think their own thoughts and give their fellow-men the fruit of their thinking. If the fruit proves to be green and is rejected, the worst that happens is that it finds no market. Originality is never a vice and may be a virtue. But there is a large party who are endeavoring to reverse these conditions in the Church; to forbid exploration and investigation unless the explorer will covenant beforehand to find nothing that his predecessor has not already found. A professor of literature broaches the documentary hypothesis of Homer, and it may be rejected, but no one thinks of turning him out of his chair. But if he broaches the documentary theory of the Pentateuch, he does it at the hazard of being tried as for a crime. The doctrine that faith is a dogma cast in an ancient mold, and that the business of the minister is to take this faith, once for all delivered as a completed thing, from his predecessors, and repeat it to his generation, destroys the spirit of prophecy. A prophet may believe in the old theology, but he cannot be a prophet if he believes in it because it is old.

And this notion, which forbids independent thinking, and enforces the prohibition by ecclesiastical penalties, vitiates theological education. In the great universities the pupil pursues his philosophical studies that he may learn how to think, and ends by constructing his own philosophy. In the theological seminaries, until a comparatively recent period, and in many of them even now, he pursues his theological studies that he may learn what to think; and was formerly measured, and still is to a degree, by the docility with which he accepts and promises to teach the system propounded by the instructor. Such a method of education, where it prevails, and in so far as it prevails, takes away the incentive to real study. "All men are lazy by nature," said Mr. Beecher; "thinking comes by grace." The grace of thinking is discouraged and the depravity of intellectual laziness helped by such a method. Men who do not think are dropped from their class in college, and a considerable number are thus dropped from every entering class in our colleges. How is it with our theological seminaries? Is an orthodox man liable to be dropped? We ask for information; our impression is, No! When the young man graduates and comes before the Presbytery or the Association for licensure or ordination, there is usually a very mild inquisition into his scholarship, and a very searching inquiry into his theology. And the object of that inquiry is too often not to ascertain whether he is accustomed to think earnestly, seriously, sober-mindedly, and yet independently on spiritual themes, but whether he accepts the system of theology which is prevalent in the Church or the denomination, and not impossibly in that particular and local ministerial assembly.

The result of such a method is to bring two classes of men into the ministry. There are a few of the very best and noblest, who are spurred, by the very obstacles which this method offers, to do their own thinking, and who use their education as an equipment for thought, not as a substitute for it. Danger and difficulty attract the heroic; and the heroic and prophetic soul is drawn to the ministry by the very fact that it is a noble field in which truly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints—that is, for the privilege of spiritual vision vouchsafed to the consecrated soul; the spirit that made the theology of James different from that of John, and the theology of Paul different from that of either. There are such prophets in every denomination, and more of them, we believe, to-day than ever before; and, thanks to them, the Church is freer, the pulpit more earnest and less dogmatic, and theological education more

an education in thinking and less a mere supply of thoughts.

The other class are men of either unoriginal minds or timid natures. They are often very earnest men. They often do a good work in the world. But they are scribes, not prophets. They do not see, but they accept what other men have seen, and report it. They mine no truth for themselves; but they take what other men have mined and put it in circulation. They make no effort to revise the standard; the standard adopted by the Church suffices. And as the spiritual faith of different ages differs less in its essential elements than in its temporal and accidental expression, they who accept and use the current expression are preachers also of the essential faith. As every new generation needs to learn the lessons taught to the preceding generation, men who are not leaders, but only teachers, render their age a vital service, if they are themselves vital. And for the most part they are. There are quacks in medicine, pettifoggers in law, peddlers in trade, scribblers in the press, and mountebanks in the ministry. But we believe that, given a body of a hundred men, picked at random out of any one of the professions, the hundred selected from the ministry will not be inferior in intellectual caliber, moral earnestness, spiritual vision, manly fiber, to either of the other groups. We desire to be modest in our claims for the clergy; we therefore do not assert for them a superiority.



An Important Message

Governor Werts's message to the New Jersey Legislature is an admirable document, and has more than local significance from the subjects treated. With respect to race track gambling, he urges the Legislature not to stop with the repeal of laws passed last year, but also to repeal the section of the Crimes Act of 1880 which "permits horse-racing at fairs and exhibitions of any agricultural or other incorporated society or body." Without exception, he says, all the race-tracks are now owned by some incorporated society or body. Prior to 1880, he continues, betting on horse-races, or acting as stakeholder thereat, or advertising such races, or making up purses therefor, was unlawful and punishable by fine and imprisonment. If race-track gambling is to be suppressed, in accordance with the dictates of morality and the instructions of the people, the repeal legislation must include the enactments of 1880. Not less sound are Governor Werts's recommendations respecting reformed primaries. He urges that the Australian ballot system be applied to elections at which candidates are nominated as well as those at which they are confirmed. The primary elections, he urges, should be held on the same day on which the voters are called upon to register, thus reducing to a minimum the trouble to the voter and the expense to the public. Such a reform cannot be carried through unless the moral forces of the State rally to the Governor's support. It would reduce to a minimum the power of the politicians, who now of necessity regulate and dominate the primaries. No set of men ever willingly gave up any part of their power, and the politicians cannot be expected to consent to arrangements by which any handful of voters may make nominations to be submitted, on the same terms as their own, to the whole body of the voters of the party. During the race-track campaign the people of New Jersey had an object-lesson in the possibilities of the present system, when at Linden the same gang of race-track retainers voted at both Republican and Democratic primaries for the same candidates, making them the

regular nominees of both parties. The present system of primaries puts nominations under the control of the organized special interests, and the general public is practically powerless to defend itself except by revolution. In New Jersey the people have had the revolution; now let them make use of it by establishing a system by which they may maintain control. If a fraction of the preaching of the past decade devoted to urging public-spirited citizens to attend the primaries were now directed to urging a system of primaries which such citizens could and would attend, a reform of permanent value could be secured.

Unfortunately, our commendation of the message of the Democratic Governor of New Jersey can in no way be extended to the conduct of his party colleagues in the Senate of that State. There has been nothing in recent years so recklessly partisan. At the last election the Republicans not only gained control of the House by a heavy majority, but also obtained a majority of one in the Senate, in spite of the fact that two-thirds of that body (nine Democrats and four Republicans) held over from previous elections. Inasmuch as New Jersey's Governor has no veto power, except the power to demand reconsideration, the Democratic machine determined at all hazards to retain control of the Senate. Therefore, long before the regular time of meeting, the nine Democratic hold-over Senators met in the Senate chamber, taking the ground that the Senate was a continuous body, and that they—a minority of the entire Senate—had a right to organize and pass upon the credentials of the newly elected members. When the newly elected members, accompanied by the hold-over Republicans, appeared, they were kept from entering the chamber. The Republicans promptly met elsewhere, and organized another Senate, which, of course, was recognized by the House. The committee of the Democratic Senate appointed to notify the Governor of its readiness to receive his message did not dare open the Senate doors lest the Republican majority enter, and therefore climbed out of a Senate window into a corridor, and thence through another window into the Governor's office; and the Governor sent his message to the Senate by the same route. The Governor submitted the legal questions involved in this episode to his Attorney-General, who on Monday of this week submitted an elaborate opinion to the effect that the hold-over Senators had the right to pass upon the credentials of those newly elected, but were required to seat all members whose election was uncontested. As we go to press Governor Werts has not yet made public his decision. According to the view taken by the Attorney-General, the Democratic Senators are bound to seat all of the newly elected Republicans, since apparently not one of their seats is contested by the opposing Democratic candidate.



Progress at Oxford

It is announced that an Honors School of English Language and Literature is to be established at Oxford University in England, Congregation (which is the governing body of the University, composed of the Chancellor, heads of colleges, professors, and resident graduates holding the degree of Master of Arts) having voted, by the decisive majority of 110 to 70, that such a school is needed. This is not final action, for the decision will, no doubt, have to be ratified by Convocation (which is the whole body of graduates holding advanced degrees); and it is not definite action, for the details of the constitution of the school are not yet determined; but it is probably decisive action, and it is action which is significant of very decided progressive