

STUDENTS of Ecclesiastical history will find in the Rev. Dr. Charles A. Briggs's "American Presbyterianism, its Origin and Early History" (Scribners) a work of great merit and of permanent value. It is marked by the graces of modern scholarship, and illustrated by the philosophical spirit of our age. As a professor of Hebrew and of Old Testament literature, Dr. Briggs, though still a young man, ranks among the foremost scholars of the day. In the special field of early Presbyterian history he has gone to the sources as no writer before him has ever done, or has ever had the bibliographical apparatus for doing. His library, consisting of books and written records and original documents relating to his subject, is the completest ever gathered, and

contains much material hitherto unknown. He deserves high praise for the skilful use and arrangement which he has made of these materials, and for the spirit of philosophy and of broad catholicity which throughout pervades the present volume. This history corrects many errors which are prevalent not less among Presbyterians than among other intelligent people as to the breadth and catholicity of the early Presbyterian Church. This body of Christians in our day is noted for rigidly insisting that all its ministers and elders must subscribe to the Confession of Faith, as a whole and as to all its parts. The belief of the church has been that this was required from the first, and the enforcement of this subscription has often given rise to controversies and strifes. But Dr. Briggs has clearly shown that the Westminster Assembly, which drew up the document, did not contemplate an individual subscription, on the part of ministers and elders, to the Confession of Faith; that subscription was not required in the Church of Scotland until many years after; and that it was not required in the American churches and presbyteries until subsequently to 1720. It was only required that ministers should not preach or teach anything contrary to the Confession. This is only one of many errors, equally prevalent and deep-seated, which this volume corrects. While Dr. Briggs's talents are more philosophical than artistic, yet he writes in a pleasing style. His work proves him to be indefatigable in research, sagacious in determining the weight which should be allowed to authorities, and serene in temper. He writes not as a partisan, or a sectarian, but as a philosophical historian.