

November, at 11 a.m., in the Sunday School Hall of the *F Jarvis Street Baptist Church*, Toronto, for the transaction of most important business.

We have reached a *crisis* in the history of our Home Mission work in Ontario; and the presence of every elected and *ex officio* member at this meeting is earnestly implored. All pastors *are* members, *ex officio*.

A general rally of the friends of Home Missions, entitled to vote at this meeting, is all-important, and it is hoped we may have a large gathering.

If this notice fails of its object, most undesirable consequences may ensue.

Come then, brethren, one and all.

By order of the Board.

THOS. L. DAVIDSON,
Secretary.

Guelph, Nov. 10th, 1877.

Contributed Articles.

EARLY MEMORIES.

CONVERSATION SECOND.

Myself. We are glad to meet you again, my good friend, and as we have another long evening before us, I trust you will favour us with some further sketches of your early experience in Canada. We have been much interested in the accounts you were so kind as to give us of your entrance into the country; yea, to so large an extent a blank wilderness, and we anticipate equal pleasure in listening to an account of your experiences, after you became a *settler*.

Student. I hope you will pardon me if I make a suggestion with respect to the course of the conversation in the first instance. We find that within a few years after you came to this country, then as you tell us an untaught lad of fourteen, that you were engaged in teaching schools and preaching the gospel with acceptance, and yet the country was almost entirely destitute of schools, or literature, or teachers of any kind. Now I have all my life been surrounded with the most favourable facilities for acquiring knowledge—good schools, abundance of books, the best of teachers, and yet I find my progress toward the goal, slow and almost discouraging. Will you kindly tell us how you managed to qualify yourself for those important positions under the circumstances given?

Oldham. Your question reminds me of the anecdote of the Scotch lad, the son of a stone mason, who, though daily engaged in supplying the mortar etc., for his father, had become learned, at least in so far as to be able to read Virgil, who in reply to the question—“How have you been able to learn Latin?” said “that when a child his father had taught him the English alphabet, and that in his opinion any person who had ac-

quired a knowledge of that, might afterwards learn whatever else he pleased.” There is truth in this answer, though it is only true of those who are endowed with great natural ability, with habits of severe application. I am not claiming either of these, and therefore the moral of the anecdote does not apply to me.

It would be both more modest and more true to say, that my qualifications for those important positions, if measured by the standards now current, would have fallen very far below the mark. Indeed they were very allowable in relation to the state of the country and the wants of the community as they then existed. As an instance I may mention that my first school consisted of fifteen pupils, to eight of whom I had to teach the alphabet; nor was there one of the other seven who could read the simplest paragraph of the New Testament, without stopping to spell many of the words. The preachers of that day were also entirely uneducated. The country, (except in a few of the towns along the front) was dependent for its religious instruction, upon the Methodist and Baptist denominations exclusively. The ministers were farmers, or men engaged in other industrial pursuits, which they continued to prosecute with as much diligence and continuity as any of their hearers. Their studies were confined to solitary meditations, while their hands were employed in the field or the shop. Indeed those simple, honest men, did not think study necessary—scarcely lawful. I mean such study as had any direct view to preparation for the pulpit; or rather,—for preaching,—as we had no pulpits in those days. They and their hearers generally, fully believed that Mark 13, 11, and the corresponding passages in Matthew and Luke applied to them and to all preachers and others who on any occasion might be called to speak in the name of the Lord, or to pray in public. To *premeditate, to take thought, or to make any previous preparation* for these occasions, amounted, in their estimation, to something like a renunciation, on their part of the promised aid of the Spirit. For myself, I was never able to adopt these views.

I could not quite attain to the unshaken faith of my brethren, that without any effort on my part—in the lazy neglect to use the powers of mind He had given me, the Lord would always speak through me or supply me with the properest words to speak. On the other hand I thought it my duty to study my sermons and endeavour to adapt them to the condition and wants of the people and the circumstances of the time. But I did this, as it were, by stealth. I could not afford to have it known, as it would have subjected me to the loss of cast, or at least to great depreciation of consequence, not only in the eyes of my hearers, but also of my ministerial brethren. I sometimes took brief notes of the leading heads of my sermons, on slips of paper the size of the leaves of my pocket Bible. One such slip generally contained my sermon, at the most two. But these must be carefully concealed; and years afterwards when we began to get chapels, the galleries, were my terror, as it was impossible to conceal my manuscript from the prying eyes above me.

But I must not abandon these honest men, my former fellow-labourers, to your contempt without a word of vindication. They have

all passed away, but I retain, and expect to retain, for a thousand years to come, the most affectionate remembrance of some of them. That their views on this subject were erroneous I admit, but the error, in their case was probably neither wicked nor mischievous. You say it discouraged study, and furnished an excuse for an indolent neglect of those means of improvement with which the Creator has supplied us. In your case and mine this would be very true. But to those men, study in your sense of the word—direct application of continuous thought to a given subject—investigation, analysis, comparison,—was entirely out of the question—partly for want of time; (they were closely, and necessarily engaged in physical labour for six days in each week,) but chiefly for want of early mental training. Men who for half an age, from early childhood have been constantly engaged in the grosser pursuits of humble life in the bush, are quite incapable of such mental efforts, and in a vast majority of cases, must so remain during the remainder of their lives, whatever more favourable circumstances may afterwards turn up. Nor did this error of theirs lead them to wicked presumption. They believed in all simplicity that they were entitled to claim God's promise that He would afford them special aid in the pursuit of His work; and you will at least admit that such a conviction so entertained must have exerted a powerful influence to drive them to the throne, and to arm them with an impurity that could take no denial. Nor would you, whom I have heard avowing the aid of the Holy Spirit for the delivery of a sermon already prepared, like to assert that no such special aid was ever afforded them.

I know that Prof. Tyndal and the scientists can easily demonstrate—to their own satisfaction—from the constancy of the natural laws, and the absolute dependence of effects upon their causes, that the thing is impossible; but we have another method of arriving at the truth, especially truth of this class, quite as satisfactory to us as their demonstrations are to them.

But I suppose our young friend is expecting a more direct reply to his question, in which, if I gratify him I must hold him responsible, at least in part, for any amount of egotism it may involve.

I have always supposed that two circumstances occurring in early childhood have had a great,—perhaps a principal—influence in deciding my subsequent course and character. The first was the gift of a pious and judicious mother, who though she was taken from me at the age of seven, succeeded within that brief space, in impressing me with a sense of personal, immediate responsibility to an everywhere present and all-seeing God, for all my actions, and even my thoughts and tempers; and yet without inspiring me with those terrors that haunt the minds of the children of some religious parents; for He was represented to me as a loving Father, no less than a holy and jealous Judge. These impressions never left me.

The other circumstance occurred a little later, and will require a more particular notice. The peace of 1815, which filled two great nations with joy, was, nevertheless, disastrous to my father's business, and from a fair competency he was reduced to circumstances of considerable embarrassment. He