

THE WESLEYAN SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1878.

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.

Dr. Rigg, the President of the British Wesleyan Conference, in a recent sermon delivered at Bradford, propounded the axiom that, while the great doctrine of justification by faith is the test of a rising or falling Church, fellowship is the test of a spiritual or a formal Church. This distinguished master of thought could not have uttered a more timely truth than that which is contained in this simple yet philosophical axiom. Methodism will do well to ponder so weighty an utterance, and, notwithstanding the whisperings which disparage the utility of the class-meeting—that "pearl of Methodist privileges," to make this ordinance of Christian fellowship what it was intended to be by our sainted Founder, "a thing of beauty, and a joy forever." It would seem strange now that other evangelical churches are coming up more and more to a just appreciation of christian fellowship and are providing for the social instinct so powerful and irrepresible in the pious mind, thus borrowing a leaf from the book of Methodism, to find any one suggesting the propriety of going back from this coigne of vantage. A careful student of that remarkable revival of religion which took place under the ministry of Whitfield and the Wesleys must see that the extraordinary spiritual quickening experienced by the subjects of that revival created the necessity for some ordinance in which their new-found life could vent itself, and maintain its ardour. The class meeting exactly met such a necessity. And is it not an undeniable fact that among Methodists at least the class meeting is most highly appreciated by those who are most alive to God? True piety is neither dumb nor reclusive. The heart in which the love of God is shed abroad, is too full to contain itself. Indeed, as well attempt to stem the tide, or to arrest the rapids of Niagara, as try to prevent the bursts of praise and the torrent of joyous emotion on the part of God's happy people. It cannot be. Nor can we afford to dispense with the manifold benefits that accrue to pious minds from Christian fellowship. In the class meeting, the dying embers of a declining life are quickened; the spark becomes a flame; the harp once hung upon the willows, is taken down, and its silent chords are swept afresh until its music cheers the reviving spirit, inspiring the mind with a joy whose rippling wavelets roll in circling ecstasies and break on the shores of the better land.

Fellowship is a necessity of spiritual life. Every christian man is shut up amidst the multitude, in the isolation to his own individual mind. The companionships of life only touch the outer circle of his being. The sympathies of life only touch a few of the many points of human nature. Every soul has its "holiest of holies" as much as the Temple and Tabernacle, and none may enter its sacred precincts. But there are times when the worshipper at this inner shrine comes out and mingles with kindred spirits like the high priest of old. Man needs a closer a more sacred communion, a fuller, deeper fellowship. This necessity of our spiritual nature is met in those hours that are stolen from the crowding activities and absorbing interests of common life, and that are spent in a blending of spirit with spirit in the place where God breathes upon us His benediction. Let kindred spirits, who are partakers of "like precious faith," and fired with the same enthusiasm often turn aside as Moses did, and God himself shall converse with them, though not from a burning bush, yet none the less truly. Did not Jesus himself frequently turn aside into a desert place, that, by communion with his disciples and by fellowship with his Father, he might fit himself for his gracious mission? And so ought we. Nothing is lost by such intermissions. The harvest will be none the less and none the later for them. Let our Sabbaths be our grand rallying points and our class meetings our seasons of spiritual recuperation. Time is all too fleet, and our opportunities all too few to justify any neglect of our means of fellowship. Following

the sage advice of our sainted Founder "Let us walk by the same rule let us mind the same thing," until we "are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant."

THE CLASS MEETING—FROM A PRESBYTERIAN STAND-POINT.

In last week's Halifax Witness, we find an article from which we give an extract:

The following is a brief outline of the Methodist organization as it exists in England and America. Does it not suggest some thought of some neglect on the part of many, or most, Presbyterian Churches?

Every congregation (or Society, as Wesley would say) is divided into classes. There are about twelve persons in each class, one of whom is styled the Leader. It is the duty of the Leader,—

"1. To see each person in his class once a week, at least; in order (1) to inquire how their souls prosper; (2) to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require; (3) to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, Church and poor [that is, where this method of finance prevails]."

"2. To meet the minister and the stewards of the society once a week, in order (1) to inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be reprov'd; (2) to pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding."

This class arrangement, when thoroughly and earnestly carried out, is a stupendous power for good. In the Methodist Churches hitherto, attendance in class is a condition of church membership; but this rule is likely to be relaxed, and there is an agitation in favour of the change. As there is no Scriptural injunction in support of such a condition, there is every likelihood of its being changed from an imperative rule to a matter of individual choice. Practically, the rule where it can be carried out is admirable; and we wish we could see some measure equally efficient adopted by our Presbyterian Churches, not as a term of communion but as a matter of expedience. We have no right to make any terms of communion stricter or narrower than those appointed by God himself.

Conservatives, who are for retaining the old test of membership, might reply, that God himself makes even this strict and narrow term of communion—"Forget not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." Still, there are many Methodists, ministerial and lay, who quite agree with our cotemporary. It would be well for Methodists to consider the advantages of the class-meeting as seen by outside observers. The means has its draw-backs—but only when negligently or imperfectly worked. A genuine class-leader is as much called of God to his work as is the minister of the Word, though the position be secondary in importance. To dispense the truth of consolation, warning, reproof, in a class-meeting requires great tact and genuine spirituality. With these qualifications at its head, the class becomes immensely powerful as a religious agency. What Moody has been doing on special occasions in the enquiry-room, Methodism has been doing for a hundred years in the class-room. And it is really pleasant to find that this wise measure of Wesley's, so long misunderstood and misrepresented, is not only approved, in essence, but also recommended by other denominations. Surely this is no time for relaxing our interest in the class-meeting, when others are beginning to espouse it.

While on this subject, we may as well confess that there is a leaf in the Presbyterian book which we might take to good advantage—the monthly Presbyterian system. They approve of our improved methods for the church's membership; we heartily endorse their improved system of ministerial fellowship and oversight of the flock. Our ministers have two annual District meetings, at one of which there is a general enquiry as respects the work of God in each District. They have a monthly system of meeting for examination into the charges in detail, at which the religious, financial and general aspects of God's work come under review. Here there is counsel afforded and a report prepared from time to time. Give them the class-meeting and the Presbytery, and both denominations would be far more efficient.

WILMOT, the infidel, when dying, laid his trembling and emaciated hands upon the Sacred Volume, and exclaimed solemnly and with unwonted energy, "The only objection against this Book is a bad life!"

EDITORIAL NOTES.

Halifax is at length portrayed as an ancient and important capital deserves. Professor A. Rugg, a German Artist of great skill has given such a pen and ink sketch of the city as astonishes one for its accuracy and completeness. Each street, each house in fact is seen in faithful, though minute outline, on a surface 3 feet 4 in. by 16 inches. We laid a finger upon the precise house in this picture which we desired to point out to a friend, though not by any means in a prominent place, Churches, public buildings, wharves, harbor with its shipping and ferry-boats, are given in beautiful miniature. Mr. Joseph Warner, Agent for this work of art, is now canvassing for subscribers, as the picture is to be lithographed for delivery in about six months from now. As a reference it will be equal to a directory, as a memento of Halifax it will be specially valuable; as a present to friends in a distance, with some mark to indicate the residence of the sender, it would be prized greatly. It is, withal, to cost only Four Dollars. J. J. Stoner, Chicago, is to be the publisher.

On Thursday last a very interesting picnic was held in connection with the Brunswick St. Methodist Mission school under the superintendency of Rev. E. B. Bramm, etc. More than a hundred children together, with their teachers and many friends, were entertained with fun and frolic, and with something more substantial, at the grounds of Mr. G. Johnson. The success of this Mission school is very gratifying and reflects great credit upon the zeal of its pastor.

In our advertising columns our readers will find a notice of Mr. Whiston's writing classes. Mr. W. has earned for himself a provincial reputation in this art. As a writer of important documents he is not equalled by any, while as a teacher he has obtained universal commendation. It is a rare attainment of this neat and systematic writing—far too rare; but Mr. Whiston both has it and proves his ability to communicate it to others.

Rev. W. W. Brewer, of this city, received the sad intelligence on Monday last of his father's death, at home in England, a few days previous. The illness of Mr. Brewer was of short duration, and consequently his death was quite unexpected. We tender our sympathies to the bereaved.—Fredericton Rep.

Musquodoboit Harbor General Conference Collection, \$1.50, was sent in after the acknowledgments appeared last week.

PAN-METHODIST CONFERENCE.

(London Recorder.) That such a Conference would be a great blessing to the church and the world can hardly be questioned. It would tend to harmonize and unify the different Methodist organizations, and to bind together in closest fellowship a people essentially one in doctrine, spirit and purpose. It would lead to such adjustments of the missionary work as to prevent friction and waste. It could not but be extremely suggestive in regard to modes and agencies for the most successful performance of the church's work of evangelization. It would doubtless give a great impulse to the cause of temperance and of Sabbath observance, to Sunday Schools, and all the beneficent activities of the church. The relation of Methodism, as a whole, to education, to civil government, to other Christian bodies, and to the world-wide mission work, would certainly come to be better understood. In a word, an increase of Christian intelligence, of conscious spiritual power, and of faith in the redemption of the race from the bondage and degradation of vice and immorality would, without question, be realized. A more earnest consecration, an intenser glow of enthusiasm, a more daring purpose of evangelism, and consequently more powerful revival and larger beneficences in every department of Christian endeavour, would mark the future progress of the church. Such an Ecumenical Conference of Methodists would, moreover, attract the attention of scholars, thinkers and reformers, and would lead to a discussion of the movement, and of the whole Methodist history, work, and mission in every leading newspaper and periodical in Christendom. Methodism has everything to gain and nothing to lose by this discussion. In such a Pan-Methodist Synod it is proposed to include representatives from the following organizations—United States: Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Methodist Protestant Church, Methodist Church, American Wesleyan Church, Free Methodist Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Coloured Methodist Episcopal Church of America, the Evangelical Association, and the Church of the United Brethren. Dominion of Canada: The Methodist Church of Canada, Methodist Episcopal Church of Canada, Primitive Methodist Church and British Methodist Episcopal Church. Great Britain: British Wesleyan Methodists, Irish Wesleyan Methodists, Primitive Methodist Church, Methodist New Connexion, United Methodist Free Church, the Bible Christian Church, and the Wesleyan Reform Union, with the French and Australian Wesleyan Methodists, and those of other countries. We can only further add that it is suggested that the Conference be composed of clerical and lay members in as nearly equal numbers as may be convenient, selected by the highest executive authority. We commend these proposals to the thoughtful and prayerful attention of the public, thankful that the Conference has appointed a committee to consider and report during the year.

GENERAL CONFERENCE.

By telegram received just as we go to press, we learn that the following elections were made on Wednesday, the first day of General Conference session:—namely,

- PRESIDENT: Rev. George Douglas, LL.D. VICE-PRESIDENT: Rev. S. D. Rice, D.D. SECRETARY: Rev. Alexander Sutherland. ASST.-SECRETARIES: David Allison, LL.D., and Judge Young.

Among the first business was the introduction of the English Delegate, Rev. Samuel Coley, Theological Tutor of Headingley College.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Milltown Circuit, Aug. 30, 1878.

DEAR EDITOR. In your last issue there were some remarks of a very pleasing character, in regard to this circuit, and also in relation to myself, but, fearing that wrong impressions may be entertained, and as the old saying is still applicable to many minds that, "Distance lends enchantment to the view," I wish to qualify the remarks made by your correspondent, so, that the Circuit may not be too highly estimated financially, nor myself flattered too generously. The Circuit is beautiful for situation, and at a very short distance from the home of the Preacher, any lover of "Nature's sublime" may feast his eyes to the full. The fairest rose however, has still its thorn, and although the day was, when this section of our fair province resounded with the din of Mill operations, and the hum of many voices, happy in the prospect of plenty to do, and wages good, yet, to day, there is a death-like silence along the river St. Croix, that chills the heart of the men, who are willing to toil, but, sad to say, are lacking the common necessities of life, hoping for better times. Financially this Circuit has been declining for some years past, for the reason I have given above. Your own beloved predecessor last March, intimated the large falling off in Circuit receipts, for the then proper action of the Quarterly Board, either to bring up the deficiency of not less than \$400, or to make an appeal for aid to the Missionary Board, so as to place the Minister who should follow in a salvage condition.

This large deficiency was made up by the drawing of the \$440 from an invested fund, which to day is not, and therefore the Circuit is not an independent one. The Minutes for 1878 declare this Circuit to be independent but the total amount raised by the Circuit was \$400, hence the necessity of qualifying the remarks of the Brother who is one that will do his utmost for the good of the cause here.

Under the circumstances, I made application to the Local Board, through F. D. M. for my travelling expenses (for I was sent here) there is no prospect of getting the same from any other source, they amount to \$30; not extravagant I think, but more than Methodist ministers on dependent circuits can afford to pay for exchange of circuits. Hoping that these remarks will disabuse any wrong impressions in regard to this being the land of Goshen, and intending to send more anon I am, dear brother, Yours sincerely, S. R. ACKMAN.

THE SUPERNUMERARY MINISTERS' AND MINISTERS' WIDOWS' FUND.

The following table shows the amount which has been raised on the circuits in the different conferences, by subscriptions in the classes and public collections, in each of the years since the formation of the General Conference in 1874, and also the average per member.

Table with 5 columns: Year, Conference, Members, Amt. from Circet col., Average per m'mbr. Rows include Nova Scotia, N.B. & P.E.I., and Newfoundland for years 1875, 1876, 1877, 1878.

During the four years the average annual contribution per member for the circuits in the Nova Scotia Conference has been 72-100 cents; in the New Brunswick and P. E. Island Conference 72-100 cents; and in the Newfoundland Conference 68-100 cents. It will be remembered that it was supposed that the annual contributions would

need to average, at least, ten cents per member, in order to render the Fund permanently successful. If this average had been reached, the Nova Scotia Conference would have contributed in 1875 \$149.91 more than it did; in 1876, \$223.66; in 1877, \$268.62; and in 1878, \$306.39; or, in the four years, \$947.78; the N. B. and P. E. Island Conference would have contributed in 1875 \$67.78; in 1876, \$235.55; in 1877, \$220.58, and in 1878, \$254.47 more; or, in the four years, \$778.38 more than it did; the Newfoundland Conference would have paid from the circuits in 1875 \$143.27; in 1876, \$151.85; in 1877, \$168.65; and in 1878, \$246.94; or, in the four years, \$710.71 more than it did. In consequence of these short comings amount in the aggregate to \$2436.87, the Fund would have failed to meet the demands upon it, if the current income from other sources had not been greater than was anticipated at the time the Fund was commenced. During the quadrennium \$200 from a legacy and \$100 a special donation were received in the Nova Scotia Conference; and \$1000 from a legacy in the N. B. and P. E. Island Conference; and the subscriptions of new members have amounted to about \$3,500 more. The Fund, therefore, has been sufficient to meet in full all the claims upon it, and to add something to its "Capital Stock" during each of these four years; but these additions have not been nearly proportionately, as they should have been, to the additions of new members, prospective claimants on the Fund in the future. There is need, therefore, that there should be renewed and increased attention given by the preachers to working up the income from the circuits in all the Conferences, if the Fund is to be kept permanently in its present satisfactory state. This will be evident to all who will notice another fact which I will mention—since 1874 the membership in our church in those Conferences has increased from 17580 to 22567; and the ministers in a still larger ratio,—the prospective needs of the Fund increase in a ratio at least as large as that of the increase of the ministry; therefore, there should have been an increase of thirty, or more per cent, in the income of the Fund during the quadrennium which has just closed from each of the three sources of income. But the fact to which I wish to call special attention is that with an addition of about 1-3 to the number of our ministers and of about 6000 to the members of the church the collection on the circuits in 1874 amounted to nearly \$200 more than they did last year. In 1874 the amount from the circuits was \$1621.25, being an average for the 17580 members of nearly 9 1-4 cents per member; but in 1878 the amount from the circuits is only \$1443.40, or an average of less than 6 1-2 cents for the 22567 reported as full members.

If this course of things should continue to prevail—prospective claimants multiply and, at the same time, the income from one of the sources upon which the Fund must always largely depend for the ability to meet the claims upon its current income diminish, instead of proportionately increasing, as it should do, a real danger will be discovered looming up in the very distant future. The time must come when the "Current income" must prove inadequate to pay in full the claims upon it. This is a danger against which every minister and every member of the Methodist Church in these Conferences should most earnestly strive. If each preacher will but faithfully observe the fifth, sixth and seventh Rule of the Fund, not only will this danger be entirely averted, but the "Current income" will be so augmented that before long a very desirable addition to the annual claims of supernumeraries and widows may be prudently made. It is very desirable that the scale of allowances should be increased, and surely every intelligent member of our church will feel this. When it is noticed that upon the present scale, a man who, after having laboured twenty years in the ministry, is compelled to become a Supernumerary, can claim an annuity of only \$200 from the Fund towards the support of himself and his family; or if a minister dies after twenty years of faithful toil in the service of the church, his widow can claim a yearly allowance of only \$100 from this Fund to aid in the maintenance of herself and her family.

The 5th, 6th and 7th Rules of the Fund to which I would most respectfully, but most urgently, call the immediate attention of every preacher in the three Eastern Conferences, are as follows, viz:—

V. Every minister shall, at the renewal of the Society ticket during the September visitation, fully explain to the members the nature and reasonableness of the claims of this Fund upon the justice and liberality of our Church. He shall then enter in the Class Book the individual annual subscriptions which are to be paid before the ensuing District Meeting.

VI. An annual public collection in aid of this Fund shall be made in all our Chapels and other preaching places in the month of December.

VII. Applications shall be made to our friends in each Circuit for Subscriptions and Donations in aid of this Fund. These Rules provide for a personal appeal during the ensuing month, September, to each one of the 25897 "members" and "persons on trial," on behalf of the Fund for "a subscription to be paid before the ensuing District Meeting." And this appeal is to be made after the minister shall have "fully explained the nature and reasonableness of the claims of our Church." If the preachers, one and all, faithfully discharge their duty, very few of the 25897 will be found, either so poor or so penurious, as to refuse to contribute something. Very few will promise less than 25 cents each; and many will gladly give a dollar each, and some much more. The preacher who will loyally observe the spirit of the 5th Rule, will, I think, make it his work to bring the claims of the Fund home to the conscience and heart of every member on his circuit. If any one absent from Class at the time of the September quarterly visitation, they will be called upon in private, as soon as possible thereafter by the faithful minister, in