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THE KESWICK CONVENTION.

BY AN IRISH PRESBYTERIAN.

TWENTY years since, a small local gathering of religious people met at Keswick with the object of helping forward each other's sanctification by Bible-study, prayer, and spiritual addresses. Now two large tents, the one holding two thousand, the other one thousand, scarcely contain the numbers from all parts of the three kingdoms, and of every Protestant denomination, who spend a week there every summer in religious conference. Everyone, therefore, must admit that the convention meets a strong desire on the part of many members of the Church. In the conduct of the meetings and in the intercourse of the people, there are some characteristics which mark off this Convention as of a distinct type. The speakers eschew apologetics the assumption being that none has come with intellectual doubts, all entertaining a common conviction as to what are the vital truths of Christianity, and having no difference of opinion on these fundamental points. Moreover, all argument about middle walls of partition between denominations is strictly forbidden, and you may have long conversations, and form a true friendship with a Keswickian without knowing to what denomination he may belong. Of course this, like every other rule, is sometimes unfortunately broken. For example, a Presbyterian lady informed me that "the previous evening the Lord had laid it on her heart to be bap-sized at a little meeting of believers." Cases like this, however, would seem to be rare, and are unavoidable in a large mixed community. Another feature of the Convention is the absence of what is known as Evangelization. Attendance is accepted as a profession of having received the gospel, and the one need and purpose of all is understood to be the attainment of a humbler and higher Christian life. Naturally, on account of a certain narrowness of subject proposed, there comes to be a monotony in the addresses, which is noticeable in reading the report; but the tension of feeling among the audience, and the magnetism of the speakers warm and brighten the meetings, so that you will rarely see a dull or drowsy listener. In fact, the majority are so eager to let nothing slip that is said, that pencil and notebook are the rule and not the exception. More sympathetic and inspiring audiences no speaker could desire; and yet sensationalism and excitability on platform or floor are rare, even the Salvation Army officers present seeming to be under restraint. A spirit of quiet reverence pervaded the people, and only in the loud outbursts of praise—nearly everyone having a copy

of the hymns with music—did the pent-up feelings of the audience find utterance. Titled nobility and rustic peasants, officers in her Majesty's army, and millionaires of commerce, students—one hundred and fifty of them, missionaries by the score, bishop and quaker, Calvinist and Arminian, establisher and disestablisher, numbers of young men of respectable position and as muscular as are to be seen on a cricket field, and numbers of young women as fair as ballroom belles and as modest as nuns, the communion of saints and the beauty of Christ's Church are as tangible and visible at Keswick during Convention week as anywhere here below. But what of their doctrine of holiness? Is it orthodox? That depends upon the lips from which you receive the teaching. A minister of the Scottish Church said to me that none could have come to the Convention with stronger prejudices against it than he, but that he had found all their principles to be in perfect harmony with the Confession of Faith, instancing the clause in which men are urged to "repent of their particular sins particularly." At the same time, lax statements are sometimes made from the platform,—what minister of the I. P. Church has not at some time spoken heresy without knowing it?—and perfectionists are not uncommon in Keswick. For example, drunkenness and evil temper should scarcely be regarded as sins which can be got rid of with equal abruptness. At any rate the Keswickian ought to admit that until the body be glorified we cannot, with sin in the very marrow of our bones, live a perfectly holy life. Bad instruments cannot do difficult work well. There is a great mystery i. e. sanctification which needs to be recognized. If it be allowable to pray, "Vouchsafe, O Lord, that we may live this day free from sin," we cannot escape the fact of the past, and the sad prophecy of the future that we daily break the commandments of God in thought, word, and deed. The grand incontrovertible truth emphasised at the Convention is to put it in Mr. McGregor's words "A wholly surrendered soul will never meet temptation by resolve, but always by the method of reliance." That is to say, sanctification, like justification, is "received by faith alone", apart from Christ we can do nothing of character building, while in Christ we can do all things.

Could I but gain the ear of the directors, one advice I should humbly present, that they would give a half holiday in the middle of the week for retirement and reflection, that on the mountain side in view of those peaceful lakes with their many shadows one might dream unchecked.

"Heaven prosper it! May peace and love,
And hope, and consolation fall,
Through its meek influence from above,
And penetrate the hearts of all,
All who, around the hallowed Fane,
Shall sojourn in this fair domain."