

DEBATE IN THE BRITISH CONFERENCE.

CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY. During the conduct of the above inquiry into character it appeared that two or three young preachers had sent in their resignation on the ground that they no longer believed in the doctrine of eternal punishment as taught in Wesley's sermons, and in his "Notes on the New Testament."

Mr. Thomas Hughes asked whether it was wise in cases like these to push their discipline so far as to compel men of high conscience to resign their place in the Methodist ministry? No one knew better than the President did all the varying views that were taken of the doctrine in question, and all the varieties of pro and con belonging to it. He thought the Conference might hold their doctrinal views firmly, and yet refuse to push matters to such a point, to such fine distinctions as to compel men to withdraw from them on the ground that their views did not precisely and fully harmonize with their Connexional standards. He submitted that question without at all committing himself to the views of those young men. He knew there were many men in the body who had doubts upon the doctrine referred to, who for some reason—probably a lack of courage or talent—had not publicly declared their doubts. (Murmurs of dissent.)

Dr. Osborn submitted that it could not be an open question among the Methodist preachers. (Hear, hear.) It was open enough to Independent preachers, and Baptist preachers—to men who had not subscribed to any creed, and had not been admitted to any communion upon the faith of any formulary—it was open to them to think whatever they pleased, and to preach whatever they pleased; but no man in the Methodist Conference was in that position. (Hear, hear.) Every man whose name was on the Minutes was in this position; they did not seek him; he sought them, and came to them, and said, "I, Thomas Hughes, or I, George Osborne, &c., believe the doctrines taught in Wesley's first four volumes of Sermons, and his Notes on the New Testament" (the longest creed in Christendom). ("Hear, hear," and applause.) He came to them with that profession on his lips, and if he did not come with that profession on his lips, they would not have looked at him. It was a sine qua non that he resigned his liberty of thought upon the fundamental doctrines contained in those standards; and the man who was not prepared for that was not prepared to act in his place as a Methodist preacher. (Hear, hear.) They had begun their union upon a certain basis, and only upon that basis could it be maintained. "My dear brethren," he continued, "I shall not be much, oftener among you, but in the name of God—I speak it with all reverence—let us have no open questions that were not open questions with John Wesley. (Hear, hear.)

Maker, Saviour of mankind, Who hast on me bestowed An immortal soul—

not a soul that may become immortal, if I believe. (Hear, hear.) You all know the hymn. Are you prepared to blot it out? (Cries of No! No!)

What after death for me remains? Celestial joy or hellish pains To all eternity.

Is that to be an open question? (Renewed cries of "No, no.") Is any man, however clever or pious or prayerful, to be allowed to teach your people to doubt about that? I say God forbid! (Here the Conference responded with a loud Amen.) I know this young man. (One of the young men above referred to.) I have no doubt he is a very good man; I have no fear as to his personal piety; and I am disposed out of the Methodist Conference to be friendly with all sorts of people that love the Lord Jesus Christ. But it must be out of the Methodist Conference. (Laughter and applause.) I do hope we shall pass on. If this brother alters his opinion on the immortality of the soul, let him come and tell us so next year. (Hear, hear.) I submit that is our position. I do not want us to keep men if they are not prepared heartily to preach our doctrines. It is no strength to us to have a hundred men that are loose fish. No strength to us to have a hundred more preachers about whom you do not know when they go into your pulpits what they will teach. To say "this is an open question," and "that is an open question, and we must all allow liberty of conscience," &c., that is not Methodist preaching. (Hear, hear.) Methodist preaching is a testimony. We have received a message—a message that God the Holy Ghost Himself inspired—and that God the Holy Ghost it waiting to seal upon the consciences of the people that hear us: a testimony—a something handed on to us—that we in our turn are to hand to our children. Let us have no separation about these matters: no open question about everlasting bliss or woe—no open question

about the "indefinite future." (Hear, hear.) If you go into the doctrine about "what is to happen in the interminable abyss of ages" what is to come of it? Surely our wisdom is to be silent where Scripture is silent. Surely our wisdom is to speak what the Scripture speaks. God that cannot lie promised eternal life before the world began, and then in due time he manifested his word through preaching. And is the preaching to contradict the counsel? Or is the eternal counsel to be set up against the manifest unmistakable preaching? God forbid! Do let us settle this at once—at least till next year—and let us have no more open questions. (Loud applause.)

The President said: No man in this Conference—certainly not a metaphysician like Mr. Hughes—can possibly think that the distinction between the doctrine which we hold, and the doctrine of the annihilation of the human spirit, is what he ventured to call "a fine distinction." (Hear, hear.) I cannot understand that. The distinction is as broad as a great gulf can possibly be. On the one side an aggregate and variety of errors from which may God save us! On the other side the clear, sharp, definite doctrine, that we have always held, and which, as Dr. Osborn has told you, is so sharply impressed upon—I will not say the hymn-book—but upon the "Sermons" and "Notes," that there is no Court in England or in Christendom that will ever shake the confidence of the Methodist people in that or permit any one to deviate from it, and force his deviation upon us. I may venture to tell you that most confidently. There are a few cardinal doctrines that are abundantly and gloriously defined, defended, and preserved to us in that great creed to which Dr. Osborn has referred in his own peculiar way—which are absolutely to us inviolable, and inviolable to our people as they are inviolable to other communities in Christendom. Let us, fathers and brethren, be thankful for this; let us glory in this. As to "a fine distinction" I cannot understand that. It seems to me (if you will allow me for a moment to speak on this subject)—(hear, hear.)—that our Saviour has been pleased to give us in his own most holy words a final utterance on this topic, from which there is no appeal. He has not left it to St. Paul, nor to St. Peter, nor to St. John, nor to St. James, though all have contributed their testimony on this point as one of supreme importance. He has given his own clear and definite and absolute dictum. (Hear, hear.) No voice in the Bible more absolutely pronounces the eternal separation of the finally impenitent soul from God than that of the supreme Lover of the human soul. There are two errors, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left. The one—the more generous error—on the right hand is that through discipline, extending it may be over incalculable ages; He would have all men to be saved, and will eventually bring all men back to himself. With regard to that doctrine, our Saviour has taught us—selecting one instance—"It were better for that man if he had never been born." Now, if souls are to be brought back to God—never mind what incalculable cycles of penal discipline may be necessary to bring the soul into life and glory at last—it never can be said, "It were better for that man he had never been born." (Hear, hear.) And with regard to the other doctrine, over which Brother Hughes is now throwing his shield (the President continued), saying what I am very sorry to hear, that great numbers of Methodist preachers hold that doctrine. [Observe, I have not heard that officially.] Our Saviour has chosen two words of the strongest meaning which the Greek vocabulary will give us, those words being dwelt upon largely in books on "Life in Christ." The one is "Death," and the other is "Destruction." He has put the two words into that immortal parable of the Prodigal Son, and he has defined what death is—it is something that a living man may know. And he has defined what "destruction" is—it is something that a living soul may undergo. "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost"—in all that perdition means in its temporary and not yet eternal form—"and is found"—(cheers)—and in the face of that declaration no critic and no theologian can ever persuade me that death means the annihilation of the spirit, and that destruction is passing out of existence. (Applause.)

Dr. Jobson thanked the President for referring as he had done to the statement of Mr. Hughes that many Wesleyan ministers held doubts in reference to these matters. He would ask whether that was the general opinion of the Conference. (Cries of "No, no.")

The President said he could not, as President, allow the kind of remark alluded to. He could bear almost anything from his old friend Mr. Hughes but that style of remark. No proof was forthcoming as to the fact, and if the fact were

proved they would know how to deal with it. (Cheers.) He hoped not another word would be spoken as to any indefiniteness and lack of security in their standards—not another word as to any danger before them with respect to their doctrinal purity. He believed they were never safer than now. The nebulous clouds that were just now floating around them would be dispersed, and their theology would appear all the brighter. (Applause.)

Dr. Punshon expressed his wish that the President would, as early as convenient, favour them with a book upon the subject.

At this point the Secretary of the Conference read a telegram which had been forwarded from the Annual Assembly of the United Methodist Free Churches, now being held at Louth, conveying fraternal greetings. The Conference agreed that a letter of kindly acknowledgment should be returned.

The Conference proceeded to the consideration of the question, "What ministers now have permission to become supernumeraries?" In the Second London District the Rev. Joseph Hargreaves had requested permission to retire from active work, and as he was completing an uninterrupted ministry of forty-eight years, it was felt that he was fully entitled to that relief. But in view of Mr. Hargreaves' unabated physical and mental vigour, and having regard to the exigencies of the Connexion, and the great need of experienced and efficient superintendents of circuits, the Committee suggested to Mr. Hargreaves the reconsideration of his purpose. If he found himself unable to withdraw his request the Committee recommended that it be granted, but not without expressing its high appreciation of his character and his long and successful labours, and its best wishes for his future and long-continued happiness. Mr. Hargreaves, in reply, said that by the blessing of God upon total abstinence—"Hear, hear," and cheers)—after all his hard work in the Methodist ministry, his physical health was to-day equal to what it was when he commenced his ministry forty-eight years ago. (Applause.) He was just completing a three years' term of thoroughly hard work, often walking eleven miles and preaching twice or three times in one day, and yet he never felt "Mondayish." He was the servant of the Conference, and if they thought he ought to go on, he would obey. As for having an assistant, he would not know what to do with him; he was quite equal to the work, and would not shrink from it. ("Hear, hear," and cheers.)

Dr. Punshon said he had forgotten to say, in connection with the previous subject, that he had a high appreciation of Mr. Randle's book, entitled, "For Ever," and he knew it was doing good; but, knowing as he did the unparalleled influence which God had given Dr. Pope over the minds of many of their young men, he thought that a book from his pen would be of great service. (Hear, hear.)

Dr. Osborn took this opportunity of recommending to the Conference and to his younger brethren a book which it was now rather difficult to obtain, which was not known in anything like due proportion to its worth, and which, although it was written more than a hundred years ago, deserved the best consideration of all who wished to see that subject treated by the hand of a master. He referred to Dr. Matthew Horberry's works (2 vols., octavo, Clarendon Press, Oxford) which might be purchased for 2s.

The President said the best thing he ever read upon the subject was found in his old friend Wm. Law, in his answer to Warburton's "Divine Legation of Moses." He hoped his brethren would read Horberry and Mr. Law too, if they could get him.

THE MUSIC OF THE SOUL.

(Report of John B. Gough's Lecture.) Mr. Gough then passed to another form of blunder. He was in a church in a strange city once, and the sexton showed into the same pew another person, whose looks impressed Mr. Gough unfavorably. The stranger had a face like mottled soap, which twitched as if a sheet of lightning had run all over it, and every now and then his lips would twist and give utterance to a strange, spasmodic sound. I got as far away from him as I could. Presently the hymn was given out, and the congregation rose to sing—

"Just as I am without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me." I saw that the man knew the hymn, and said to myself, "He can't be so disagreeable after all." I got nearer. He would sing. It was awful—positively awful. I never heard anything like it; and occasionally he would make that strange noise with his lips. Then

he'd commence again, and sing faster to catch up with the other singers, and perhaps he'd run ahead. They came to the next verse. He'd forgotten the first line; and while the organist was performing the interlude, he leaned toward me, and whispered, "would you be kind enough to give me the first line of the next verse?" I did so—

"Just as I am—poor, wretched, blind,"

"That's it," said he; "I am blind—God help me;" and the tears came running down his face, and the tear-lids quivered; "and I am wretched, and I am paralytic." And then he tried to sing—

"Just as I am—poor, wretched, blind." At that moment it seemed to me that I never heard a Beethoven symphony in my life with as much music in it as in that hymn sung by that poor man, whom Christ had made happy in his lot.

THE CANADIAN METHODIST MAGAZINE, August. S. Rose Publisher, Toronto. \$2.00 a year; single numbers, 20 cents.

The copious introduction of engravings into this Magazine has greatly enhanced its popular interest. The present number is embellished with twelve engravings illustrating the more striking "Wonders of the Deep" in the New York Aquarium. Don Johnson's Saga is a charming Icelandic "autobiography," written in broken English by a native who had taught himself that language. The Editor, in "Notes of Summer travel," gives an interesting account of Quebec and its thrilling historic associations. President Cummings, of Columbia College, gives a sketch of Mozart, with a pathetic account of the composition of his last requiem. The stories are of graphic character, and the number is lighter and more popular than usual—a concession, perhaps, to the hot weather. The Romish Riots, Railroad War, Dunkin Act, and other current topics are treated in a fresh and vigorous manner. The next number, it is announced, will contain an article on "Education at the Centennial Exhibition," with three full page cuts of the Canadian Exhibit, and ten other engravings. The Manager of the New York Aquarium, which was copiously illustrated in the July number, asserts that those illustrations surpassed even those on the same subject in Scribner's Magazine.

OBITUARY.

MRS. STEPHEN FULTON.

Death was unusually busy among the membership of our Church at Wallace, during the time of my absence at Conference and exchanging circuits. In the later issues of the WESLEYAN have been references to two, who are worthy to be had in remembrance, Mrs. John Canfield, whose "children arise up and call her blessed," and Mr. William Fulton, who had just completed his ninety-third year at the time of his death, and whose characteristic qualities as a man and a Christian might be summed up in two words, "unassuming, upright."

In regard to Mrs. Stephen Fulton, much might be said concerning her virtues as a Christian woman. The name she bore entitled her to the respect of Wallace Methodism, and that respect was universally accorded her, as the widow of the late Stephen Fulton, but for her own sake as well, she was loved and esteemed. My own acquaintance with her dates back some three years. Nothing could exceed the kindly interest manifested by her in the comfort of the minister and his family. But in this respect she was not exclusive—her sympathies were large and far-reaching. To the sick and suffering she was ever ready to minister. We never asked as to the date and circumstances of her conversion, but that at some time and probably in the early period of life, she had experienced the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit, was very evident. Her walk was consistent, her trust in God genuine and supporting, her disposition eminently charitable. During the two years prior to her death she was called, in the Providence of God, to pass through severe trial. We watched her from day to day, and as she was plunged yet deeper and deeper in the abyss of sorrow, with feelings of amazement.

The calm, unruffled, patient and uncomplaining disposition betrayed not to the stranger the anguish of her heart, but evidenced to her "companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," how fully she had experienced the sanctifying grace of God. In health, in sickness, in life, in death, she showed that she had fixed her affections upon things above, and that her hope in Christ was an "anchor to her soul, sure and steadfast." On Friday, June 29th,

Mrs. Fulton fell asleep in Jesus. On the following Sabbath a large number accompanied her remains to the grave and listened to the exposition of Job's rapturous words, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, &c."

A. D. MORTON.

Hantsport, Aug. 17, 1877.

MES. MARY O. SCHUREMAN.

Died at River Philip, May 13th, 1877. Mrs. Mary O. Schureman, relict of the late John Schureman, Esq., in the 73rd year of her age. From childhood she was favoured with exalted religious privileges. Her parents were God fearing, and spared no pains to give their children a sound religious education. Her father, the late John Black, Esq., of River Philip, was for many years an acceptable and successful local preacher of the Methodist Church. Amid such gracious influences, it was no marvel that the daughter in the morning of life was led to choose the Saviour for her portion. She united immediately with the Church of her choice, and remained a consistent and faithful member to the end of life, which covered over half a century. Her memory was full of incidents of early Methodism in this region. Quiet and unassuming, yet firm in her faith, she loved the Saviour and His Church, and felt a strong anxiety for the salvation of the unconverted, which she often manifested. During special services held here last autumn—though unable to attend—she would inquire concerning the meetings, and expressed to the writer her earnest desire for the conversion of her neighbors, especially the members of her own family. In her family she was a devoted and affectionate wife and mother. To the poor she was a friend. In her home there was always a warm greeting for her pastor. During an acquaintance with this mother in Israel, of three years, we learned to appreciate her many qualities, which caused her to be loved by those who knew her worth, and which brought together a large congregation on her burial day. Though she had been somewhat complaining for a few days, yet on the last night of her life, she retired in much her usual health and spirits; but ere the morning came, which was a clear and beautiful Sabbath, emblem of the rest above, our sister was not, for the Lord took her. Thus swiftly and painlessly the mortal part on the immortal. W. A. Spring Hill Mines, Aug. 10, 1877.

MR. JAMES NICOLL.

Our dear departed brother was born in Guernsey, in the year 1798. Came to Canada—via Sydney—about the year 1815, and two years later returned to Sydney, where he soon married and settled at Forks. During Rev. Mr. Webb's ministrations on the Sydney circuit, he was led to Jesus and began at once to labor in the vineyard of the Lord. About thirty years after his marriage he removed to Gabarus, and as a leader in prayer and class-meetings he served our cause here faithfully and well.

He watched patiently for fifteen years by the side of an afflicted wife, whose sufferings terminated in death less than two years ago. He trained a large family, most of whom live to-day to emulate his devotion. Religious reading engaged his leisure moments and religious conversation was his delight. He was loyally attached to Methodism, to its ordinances, its doctrines, and its ministry. He was withal a happy and useful Christian. After the death of his wife his health gave way. Rheumatism seized him. He declined rapidly. And after keeping his bed for two or three weeks, full of faith and peace—fell asleep in Jesus, at his son's residence, Gabarus, on the 9th of July, 1877. J. A.

ROBERT ENMAN.

Died at Victoria West Egmont, P. E. I., of consumption, in the 25th year of his age, after a lingering illness of three years. Of the departed we can say that although he was called away at that period of life when human nature shrinks from death; yet his submission to the Divine will was indicative of the change wrought in the whole soul by the Holy Spirit, which takes away the sting of death. His hours of pain were sweetened by the consciousness that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us. And as the body weakened and the lamp of life became feeble, so the soul mounted on the pinnacles of faith by that sublime assurance of being absent from the body and present with the Lord, which changed the door of death into the gate of heaven, and gave a silver lining to the dark cloud of sorrow which hung over the hearts of bereaved ones. A large number of persons were present at the funeral, after which an address was given from Rev. xxi. 4, being the words selected by the deceased, some hours previous to his death. H. P.