

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

For The Presbyterian.]

CONFERENCE OF THE PRESBYTERY OF TORONTO ON STATE OF RELIGION.

A very valuable idea is that illustrated by this conference. The Presbytery assembled at Brampton on May 22nd, to spend the afternoon and evening in conference upon themes connected with the religious life and work of the congregations under their care. The day unfortunately proved a wet one, and no doubt this prevented many from being present. Notwithstanding this, a large number of ministers, elders and people assembled, and a most pleasant and profitable time was enjoyed. The chair was occupied by Rev. J. Cameron, of the East Church, Toronto, Moderator. Rev. Mr. Roger, of Ashburn, Convener of the Synod's Committee on the State of Religion, being present, was invited to correspond. After devotional exercises, the report on the State of Religion for the last year was read by Rev. R. D. Fraser, Convener of the Presbytery's Committee.

A paper on "The Lord's Supper" was read by Rev. A. Gilray, Toronto, who devoted his attention specially to the best methods of observances, that the occasion may be impressive and profitable. The service should not be protracted to tediousness; yet the sermon should not be omitted. The consecration prayer should be carefully considered and appropriate. Dr. Hodge's views were quoted. A choice passage of Scripture at the close was often better than an after-table address. An effort should be made to secure the presence of the young to the close. As to frequency of observance, a monthly communion had been introduced to many of the Presbyterian Churches of England, and some in Scotland. Dr. D. Fraser, of London, was quoted as saying that, instead of detracting from its solemnity, it seemed to be attended by increased interest and numbers.

Rev. Mr. McLeod endorsed Dr. Fraser's views, and quoted Dr. Brock, of London, after twenty years' experience, to the same effect. He called attention to the fact that a weekly celebration was the practice in the early Church. It was also the aim of the Reformers. Calvin, for example, tried to do away with the meagre thrice a year observance at Geneva, which he said he believed was the devil's arrangement. Our own ancient directory of public worship commended it. The personal experience of many of us visiting abroad, between home observances, have proved for ourselves its enjoyment and profit.

Rev. Mr. Macdonnell would like the Apostles' creed repeated in unison. He introduced it into the consecration prayer. He liked the reading of choice passages of Scripture during as well as after the service, and less sermonic addresses. He would like to see a weekly observance, though in St. Andrew's, Toronto, they had it only four times a year. As to dealing with the young, he tried to instruct them specially and carefully before admission, getting them to write to him answers to appropriate queries.

Dr. King emphasized the importance of giving prominence to the objective facts of redemption, turning much attention to Christ, His death, and His love, and less to our own feelings. He favoured a communicants' class and a special reception service. He had no pronounced views as to frequent observance, but he felt that there were two sides to the question, and he feared it might not lead to frequent individual observance.

Rev. Mr. Pringle, of Brampton, was anxious to see our young men brought to the Lord's table, and felt the importance of parents, ministers, office bearers, and all interested uniting in earnest efforts for this purpose.

Rev. Mr. Milligan introduced the "Utility of Pastoral Visitation" in a thoughtful paper. The very name of pastor implied the visiting referred to. Its special object is the spiritual welfare of the family or individual. With the help of Goethe, Carlyle, and Aristotle, he showed the philosophy of the fact that the preacher as well as the people would be benefited by it, helping him not only to themes, but to the best frame for discussing them. Eloquence is a poor thing without a man behind it. "Parsons" should be true "persons"—"the men" of the Highlands. The contact of a true man with men was something full of meaning, and often of power, as Christ typified by His "touch" when on earth.

Rev. Mr. Hogg doubted much the value of ordinary formal visits. Informal, kindly, sympathetic visits he enjoyed and practised.

Rev. Mr. Parsons gave the experience of a 16-year pastorate, in which he found he learned more of the condition of his flock in the conversations of the congregational Bible class than in any other way.

"Blest be the tie that binds" was now sung.

In the absence of Rev. Mr. McKay, the subject of "How to interest the Young in Missions" was introduced by Rev. R. D. Fraser in an earnest speech, showing the importance of speaking much of the Church's great work for the heathen not only in the Church and the Sabbath school, but the home. Missionary literature for the young was of great importance; also the training of the young to *do something themselves* of the nature of work as well as gifts. Rev. Mr. Parsons called attention to the great responsibilities of parents in this matter. The missionary spirit is the Christian spirit, and parents, under God, are responsible for that. Rev. Mr. Hogg, Dr. Fraser, Rev. Mr. Milligan, and Dr. King also urged the importance of this subject.

A most interesting afternoon was closed with the doxology and benediction. The interval till the evening meeting was very enjoyably spent in the ante-rooms of the beautiful new stone church the united congregation of Brampton have erected for themselves. Here the ladies had provided a bountiful repast, for which at the close they received a hearty vote of thanks.

In the evening, after devotional exercises, Dr. King introduced the subject of "Tests of Spiritual Growth, and evidences of it in our congregations." He applied as tests the chief questions of the Assembly's circular, touching such points as church attendance, liberality, family religion, ingathering of the young, influencing of the careless, etc., in regard to which there were many things of a hopeful nature, with many too that were discouraging. On a review of the whole his conclusions would be favourable, were not grave doubts suggested by three things—(1) the prevalence of sceptical views, (2) the extravagant and selfish use of money, and (3) habits which lead to Sabbath desecration among professed Christians as well as others. The Church had fallen upon troublous times, and, like the patient at a critical stage, could she but "hold her own" it would be the moral equivalent of an advance.

After a few remarks from Mr. Milligan, a call was made upon Rev. Mr. Roger to speak, to which he responded briefly, pointing out the insufficiency of any tests of spiritual growth but the infallible standard of Holy Writ. We must not trust to any "measuring of ourselves by ourselves." As to the issue of the conflict with present day evils, he preferred to view the Church, not so much as in the grasp of a mighty and malignant foe, against whom she could barely hope to "hold her own," as in the rescuing arms of an infinite Saviour, who opened His veins into hers, and shouted into her dull ear, "As I live you shall live also;" "I have come that you might have life, and have it more abundantly;" "According to your faith be it unto you."

Rev. Mr. Parsons followed with some interesting instances recently coming under his notice of spiritual growth and Christian courage of some of his own flock—pleasing instances of godliness in business men, full of encouragement to all faithful ministers of the Word.

Principal Caven next spoke. Addressing himself mainly to the congregation assembled, in very feeling terms he urged the importance of the study of the Bible, and prayerful, humble imitation of the life of Christ. The avowed selfishness as well as materialism of public life at the present day was most painful and alarming.

All joined in singing "Lord, I hear of showers of blessing," after which Rev. Mr. McLeod addressed the meeting on the subject of "Family Religion." The want of it was the root of a large portion of the irreverence, scepticism, worldliness, frivolity and vice which abound amongst us. The manifest inconsistency and irreligion of many professedly Christian parents are a fruitful heritage of evil to multitudes of our youth. The pulpit supplemented by the Sabbath school are utterly inadequate to reach and save the young. Without the parents' aid the task is hopeless. With many telling illustrations he impressed the solemn responsibility of parents upon those who were

present. He earnestly protested against the omission of praise at the family altar.

Mr. Sutherland, elder of Knox Church, Toronto, followed in a few earnest remarks. Mr. McLure, of Brampton, also briefly responded to an invitation to speak, and suggested, from experience, the interest given to family worship by following the course of daily readings connected with the Sabbath school lessons.

After singing "Saviour, more than life to me," Mr. Macdonnell spoke upon "Prevailing Forms of Worldliness," taking for his key-note "using the world as not abusing it," or "over-using" it. This pointed us the golden mean between excess and asceticism. He did not condemn or denounce pleasure, but it must be joy of which God is the partner and chief element. In scathing terms he rebuked and exposed the greed of hasty gain, which prevailed to-day so largely. He also dealt vigorously with worldliness in the Church, which delighted in music and architecture, giving to these the homage and adoration due to God alone, to the desecration of His holy place and presence. The nearness to the train time curtailed this tide of eloquent fervour. As the Conference closed with prayer and praise, the brethren from the East hastened to the train and were soon on their way home. All, from the doctors of divinity downward, seemed to agree that the Conference was a success, such as should encourage the Presbytery to repeat the experiment of such gatherings outside the city. The probabilities of good to ministers and people were very clear to minds and hearts fresh filled with the fruits of mutual counsel and edification.

MISSION WORK AMONGST THE COMMUNISTS OF PARIS.

THE PROBLEM OF WOMAN'S MISSION SOLVED.

Of all the Christian workers amongst the *ouvriers* of Paris, the best known, after Mr. and Mrs. McAll, is Miss De Broen, a lady who had commenced work in Belleville, the headquarters of the Communists, before the arrival of the English friends whose marvellous success my last letter briefly sketched. In the early part of the summer of 1871, a few days after the regular army had succeeded in putting an end to the Commune, which had been guilty, during its brief reign, of such horrible crimes and deeds of blood, Miss De Broen visited Paris in company with Mrs. Alsop, a member of the Society of Friends. The time of terrible retribution had then arrived. Everyone connected with the late mad outbreak of passion was about to suffer one or other of a threefold fate: they were either to be shot, transported for life, or obliged to fly the country. After the provocation which had been given, it was hardly to be expected that a nice discrimination would be observed by an enraged soldiery, so that the streets of Belleville literally streamed with human blood—the blood of the innocent in some cases as well as that of the guilty. Shortly after their arrival these ladies went to visit Père La Chaise, the famous cemetery, which takes its name from the confessor of Louis XIV., who had made its site a gift to the city. The day preceding this visit five hundred Communists had been taken out to this cemetery, and after being shot were hurled into a long trench dug as a common receptacle for their bodies. And here the visitors found a crowd of women and children—the families and friends of the dead—some of whom had brought crosses bearing the names of lost husbands, fathers or sons, while others carried wreaths of *immortelles* as tokens of their loving remembrance. All were suffering great affliction, some in deep silence, but most of them were venting their sorrow in wild wailings of rage and revenge. The English strangers, deeply touched by such sad scenes of woe, ventured to address words of comfort to some of the poor distracted women, telling them of Him who is the only true Comforter. Finding that their services were not rudely rejected, their interest in these poor women and children did not stop here. On their return to the hotel, Miss De Broen, who had been one of Mrs. Pennfather's assistants at Mildmay Park, London, and accustomed to such work, informed her friend that God had put it into her heart to remain at Paris, and devote herself to labour amongst these wretched people, who, guilty as they undoubtedly were, were not beyond the reach of the love of Christ. Many obstacles to such an undertaking were suggested by her friends; but before her strong faith, what ap-