

## CONVERSATIONS AT OUR PRAYER MEETINGS.

For the last sixteen months we have continued the practice alluded to in a former number of the *Record*, of having a conversation on some given subject at our prayer meetings in Halifax, on the third Wednesday of the month. We took notes of the first two or three meetings, and published them in the *Record* to show how the plan was working, and we have been asked to give summaries of one or two more nights this year. The subject for January was "the relation of the Sunday School, the Bible Class, the Prayer Meeting, and the Eldership, to the Church." Four short addresses were given, and it so happened that each speaker took up a different branch of the subject. The addresses, along with the introductory remarks of the Chairman, and prayer and praise at different intervals, occupied the hour. Subjoined are our notes of the remarks made by the speakers:—

(A.) As an old Elder, I feel it a duty to speak a few words on the eldership. As far back as the times of Moses, we find the germs of the institution and the necessity for it. In Jethro's advice to his son-in-law (Exo. xviii.) to choose able men out of the congregation of Israel to assist him in the work of judging the people, and in the appointment of seventy elders (Numbers xi.) by the express command of Jehovah, who were to receive from God the same spirit He had given to Moses, and who were "to bear the burden of the people" with him, we have what we may call the origin of the office. The special duties connected with it change with the times, but as to the main outlines of them there can be but little doubt. They are, first, to counsel the pastor; and secondly, to be rulers with him in things spiritual. In the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom and safety. One man may be arbitrary. On many subjects he may be ill-informed. Besides, it is the duty of the elders to divide the work of visiting the people with the minister. I feel that in this I have fallen short, partly from my own fault, and partly from the fault of the people. St. James says,—“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church.” Now, I have never, all the time I have been an elder, once been sent for by the sick. Sometimes I do not know that the people whom I might assist with counsel or otherwise are sick. At other times there is on us the fear that we may be considered intruders.

Another duty of the eldership among us is that of distributing the funds given by the congregation for the relief of the poor. This is because we embrace the duties of the deaconship; and the work cannot be done properly by us unless we visit the poor, and learn to do the most good possible with the money, and to ascertain who really are the most needy.

From a direction given by St. Paul to Timothy, we find that pastors are described as 'elders who labor in work and doctrine,' or teaching elders. The duty of the main body of the elders must be so to work that the pastor may be able to give himself entirely to teaching the Word. I believe the distinction between the two kinds of elders to be both scriptural and founded in reason, and that the more faithfully it is worked out, the better it will be for the church.

(L.) Every one here connected with a Sunday School will feel it right that we should speak of its relation to the Church. It is—without depreciating any of the other auxiliaries—the most important to the prosperity of the Church; and yet how few outside of the office bearers of the School ever visit it! If the relation between it and the congregation be so near and dear, why is it that a greater interest is not shown? Look at the different way in which parents act, when other tuition is concerned. They make diligent enquiries about the teacher; but their children may attend a Sunday School for years without their once visiting it, or even knowing the teacher's name who is instructing their children in religion. Some may think that their visits might be considered intrusion, or might interfere with the order of the school;