

Address of the Retiring President of
the Maritime Convention, Rev.
G. O. Gates, M. A.

To the members of the Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces:

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS,—Through the mercy and faithfulness of our covenant-keeping God, we meet today in our Convention, in its 52nd annual meeting, for the transaction of business relating to the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We meet to-day, after another year of work, after another year during which we have faced difficulties not unlike those of previous years, difficulties, some of which we in His name have overcome, some of which we yet face, but to our faith they are conquered and some before which we have fled, leaving them masters of the field. We meet, who last year in that spiritual season at Berwick, a season never to be forgotten in our history, to give an account of our denominational stewardship and to plan our work for the year to come.

It is fitting, too, that we record our thankfulness to God that we have so goodly a place in which to hold this session of the Convention. The Lord has assisted our brethren in this part of the city and since that memorable occasion of two years ago when amid song, prayer and eloquent addresses the corner stone of this building was laid, it has been a work, arduous indeed, but of love to place brick upon brick until the building was completed and then with joyous heart this labor of their hands was publicly set apart to the service of God. Nor should we omit to say that already within these walls under the preaching of the Word witnessed unto by the Holy Spirit, souls have been won for Christ. And this is but one of the houses of worship that within our Convention's bounds has been completed during the year, Zion, Yarmouth, New Glasgow and other churches rejoice in new and commodious church buildings set apart to God's service, since our last annual meeting.

If at this time we could recall the many cheering things that have been written in respect to our churches and which with glad hearts we have read from week to week in the columns of our denominational paper, the MESSENGER AND VISITOR, a paper that has been in all its history a credit to us, and was never better than now. We should be inclined I think to turn this first session of our Convention into a praise and prayer service in which all would like to have some part. Truly the Lord has been good to us. Our churches have been blessed. The membership is being built up into noble Christian character. Pastors are girding themselves to the work and are giving more and more thought and study to the Word which is able to save the soul. A host of young men and women is being trained for grand aggressive work, and in the near future those who are the living will witness a Baptist church membership in these Provinces having a larger percentage of active workers than at any other time in our history. These young people are being trained to give, regularly and systematically, are being taught a loyalty to Christ and His Church, and will in their day of activity take a prominent place among the devoted followers of our Lord. Standing as we do now and looking back not only over one year but as well the years that have long since gone by, letting pass before our minds some of our denomination's early struggles and triumphs, in which some who are still with us had a noble part, though the many who helped to make our denomination what it is, have years since passed on to their reward, we who are now in the midst of the work, cannot but regard ourselves as the heirs of a splendid heritage, the sons of a noble ancestry. This being so is it not evident that we should earnestly attempt to make every year in aim, in service a better one than the preceding? Nothing less, brethren, will be worthy of us who are the heirs of an illustrious past and who tread to-day in the footsteps of noble and Christ-like men, nothing else in an age when we are brought into a healthy, strong and competitive rivalry with other religious bodies, will secure for us a first rank in standing.

Missions and Education.—There are two special departments of work to which as a denomination we are committed and for which this representative body stands. Two important trusts that we received from those who were the fathers of our denomination in these provinces. Missions and Education are the two departments of our work and are here named only to impress again upon you why we are here assembled, for what we are to plan and for what to pray. And now for both these departments of Christian activity let me here plead for a marked advance.

For the sake of greater efficiency, the general subject of Missions is divided into Home and Foreign, work for fields at home, work for fields abroad. The home department means more than the immediate Home Mission work on fields within the limits of the Maritime Provinces. It embraces an interest with the other Provinces of

the Dominion in the work known as the "Grande Ligne" and Manitoba and North West Missions. Home Mission work is then Dominion in character. And when, for a moment, we think of this Dominion, magnificent in its extent from ocean to ocean, most hopeful in its possibilities of a great future, with vast stretches of territory, rich in natural resources and destined in the near future to be the home of millions, who here under a flag more truly the flag of free men than any other ever unfurled to the breezes of heaven, work under such circumstances for our native land, for humanity, for God must be most inspiring and ought to be prosecuted with vigor and earnestness. And so I plead in this address in the behalf of our country, that you Baptists, loving your home land, and if need be ready to die for its defence, that you, conscious that truth and righteousness make for a country's weal, conscious that a God-given mission is yours in the spread of the principles of freedom and truth, rise to the importance of this hour, when our country is yet in a formative period and put forth efforts worthy of yourselves and demanded by present and pressing needs.

The claims of the Grande Ligne Mission on the Baptists of this land, that mission so owned of God for good during its history, a mission so tested in its baptism of trials, are greater than many of us are entertaining. Nor of less moment to us as Canadian Baptists is the work that looms up before us in the great North West, a work that we must have a share in would we see our principles dominate the Provinces west to the Pacific. And then, too, the work needed to be done in our own immediate midst, within the bounds of this convention should move our hearts. To neglect in any way the weak field, in these maritime provinces would be for us a most ruinous policy. To allow to pass from our hands even the weakest interest is but little better than criminal. If for the years to come we are to expect enlargement in the different departments of our work, if the staff of missionaries on the Telugu field is to be multiplied, if we are to see our University with increased facilities for work and crowded with students, then, as a first means to such an end, must we with a tender and jealous care, nurture these weaker interests scattered here and there in our midst. Brethren we ought to be planning with more liberal hand and sustain with a greater expenditure of money than work specifically known as Home Mission work.

There are certain difficulties that we meet, but thank God, they are not insurmountable. We have not during the past two or three years seen eye to eye in the management of this work, at least so far as this Province is concerned; but let us as brothers in our Lord give each other credit for sincerity of motives, for earnestness of desire to do what each considered the best thing for the provincial work. And to-day as before God, let each one of us resolve that if in thought or word we have regarded each other in any unkindly spirit, here we forget the past, here we put in practice the yielding spirit for a great good, here we unitedly bring heart close to heart and effort side by side of effort, to help one another in these provinces, to give to the Home Mission work a new and an inspiring stimulus.

There is needed to-day more intensely aggressive efforts put forth to aid the weak fields, to cultivate many a section of territory now almost waste and that once was the scene of toil and rewarded labor on the part of those long since gone to their reward. Let us today say these fields shall again blossom, if by our increased interest and persistently pressing on the work in the name and for the sake of our Lord such an end can be attained.

Foreign Work.—In our work abroad a more aggressive policy should at the time be inaugurated to give the present generation of Telugus, now under our watch care the Bread of Life. Nearly a whole generation has passed away since that memorable meeting in May of 1875 when it was decided that our missionaries should take as their field of labor the northern portion of the Telugu country. During these years much work has been done and which has told for the eternal good of many of those, who but for our care for them would have lived and died in darkness. The fields were never so promising, never so full of hope, and that a great ingathering is in the near future we have the best of reasons for believing. But look at our present force on the field. Oh, how inadequate. Look at the field through the eyes of those who today are waiting the decisions of this Convention. Missionaries who at this hour are pleading with God that He will move us to attempt greater things than ever before, that the hundreds of thousands on their respective fields might in some way have a saving Christ proclaimed unto them. I would that during these sessions we might look on that distant field of need with its hundreds of thousands in darkness, but at the same time a field of promise and hope, with the emotions and with longings of our devoted missionaries. I do not wish to complain. I would deal faithfully with this question. For 25 years since we began this special work 50,000 per annum of these people to whom no message of life had come have died—died in darkness. Can our present missionary force overtake the work that lies before them? How much longer can Sanford, Churchill and Archibald, the oldest of our band, hold out? They are tottering now, and it will be no matter of surprise if before our next meeting we shall have news of a final collapse of some of these. Brethren, for our wearied missionaries' sake, for the love and concern you bear those who with worn and weakening bodies are holding on when rest is longed for, for the sake of men and women dying by the hundred every day and having no knowledge of the Christ who alone can save, for the sake of that Christ of whom in your happy experiences you sing "My Jesus I love thee," more for your own sake, for the credit of your own name and profession, as the honest, loyal followers of Jesus, for whom you are in duty bound to do and dare and should he demand even to die, by all these things let me ask you to come to the help of this department of our work, to cheerfully respond in this hour of need and hope and promise, to lovingly make what ever sacrifice the hour demands in loving trust in Christ. But once we pass through this world. But one short life here. The Lord help us to make this an earnest life, an unselfish life. Here is an opportunity. Here

is an open door. Will we prove ourselves equal to the occasion? Self denial? yes, but there is not an act of self denial made for others' good and the glory of Christ but will bring to the denomination, to the churches, to the individual members, blessings greater and richer than ever we have yet enjoyed.

Educational Work.—To our educational work let me briefly refer. This department lies at the foundation of all our aggressive efforts. Here must be given our best thought. Here is needed our greatest wisdom. Here is demanded by the ever increasing needs of a growing denomination, by the facts of being placed side by side of worthy competitors in the march of the ages, by the fact that "the world moves," more and more of outlay, large and yet larger endowments, increase in number of instructors, more commodious buildings, in fine every generation if keeping pace with the times must expect an increase in the demands for educational work. To stand still will be to be left behind, and woe betide the Baptists if they allow for any cause their representative institution of learning to become second to those in the land. Let us not have a feeling of sadness if an increased income be asked for as the order of the day. If that expenditure be a wisely used one, it is a sign of growth and growth we need. . . . In our University at Wolfville we have a good thing. What a history we can appeal to. What a record through the past 50 or 60 years. No, not in these Provinces, not in the Dominion, not in America is there a more splendid record, such return for the outlay, such dividends to a denomination for its investments made. Think, too, of the blessings high heaven has been pleased in so many ways to bestow. We are proud and justly so of Acadia's past. But we cannot live on the past. We can not advance with a progressive age on a record. What is needed today is an increased annual income that will assure the Governors that their efforts to keep our own institution abreast of the age meets our warmest wishes, pleases our ambitions, answers the desires of our hearts. To this end there is a cumbersome indebtedness of thousands of dollars that should be removed. It does not pay in denominational work to have overdrawn bank account. Increase there must be of thousands of dollars to the endowment fund. Large outlays will be necessary to take full advantage of the generous bequest of the late Mr. Payzant, and, brothers, can we not say with confidence that the aid needed to meet the exigencies of the hour will be forthcoming? Will not a large increased amount pledged now be a wise move on our part as a denomination? As Baptists we are in these provinces to stay. Let us so arrange our denominational business, so plan, so build as those who expect permanency, who in our representatives are to remain here until in majestic glory our blessed Lord shall come.

The question now arises how are we to make this advance which all are agreed in saying should be made? Repeated calls are coming to us from every quarter for help. These many calls, not always wisely made, are wearisome to the flesh if not the soul. Many in our constituency have not large amounts at their command that can be used for purposes outside the needs of their own individual church. Those most often called upon are in danger of becoming discouraged as they are again and again appealed to, especially when they think they are bearing all the burden that it is possible for them to carry. They say in discouraged tones, and what's the use? I may be permitted to give a few hints, which at some other time, others of you may see fit to enlarge upon.

And first let me say our fathers left us a goodly heritage. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." In days when our denomination was comparatively few in numbers and very limited in financial resources, these laid a grand foundation in denominational works for the good of those coming after them. They began Home Mission work; they collected money to be expended in giving the gospel to the heathen; they founded our Academy and College; they began the endowment of the same, collecting thousands of dollars for this purpose. They traversed these Provinces by the sea, not in vestibuled trains or even in the luxurious stage coach, but on foot, on horse back, along bridle paths where there were no roads and all for the purpose of planting Baptist Churches, for giving to those who held like beliefs with themselves the best of privileges that was in their power. They ever realized that each year advances must be made and to this end they gave, they labored, they sacrificed, they put forth efforts that which none more heroic have been chronicled in the history of these Provinces. Men and women vied with each other in the splendid work that was done. They builded as they were able houses of worship, plain, 'tis true, but the best they could and within these they proclaimed the gospel with telling power. Many of these places of worship, meeting houses as they were called, still stand and yet remain the church homes of godly congregations. Now, instead of the fathers, we the sons are here. We stand on the shoulders of the past generation. The younger men and women have come into the father's and mother's possessions. Many of us know but little of hardship or privations like those of the generations gone. Many among us found on our entering the church of Christ, a good place of worship; when we wanted to go abroad to school an Academy, a College all equipped and our availing ourselves of these was but at a minimum cost.

But the age demands enlargement. The present calls for enlargement. We must not ignore the fact that the next generation's interests must be cared for. Our honored fathers taught us this lesson. To day our younger men and women must realize, must have the burden of this great responsibility laid upon them, that it is for them to carry on this work, carry it on not merely as the fathers did; but as the fathers would were they here now and in the enjoyment of what we possess. Think you those godly, those self-sacrificing, those men of such heroic purposes would rest with things as we find them at the opening of this convention. No, by no means, no. They would gird themselves to the needs of

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