



Ontario Women in Convention.

[Report of the Women's Institute Convention, held in Toronto, November 13th, 14th and 15th.]

May one be pardoned for beginning a report with a bit of reminiscence? Some years ago, when I was teaching in a public school, one of the children asked me, one day, about an avalanche. Of course, I drew a very vivid picture of the reality. "Perhaps," I said, "a little bird, up on the mountain-side, by a flip of its wing, has set a bit of snow rolling," and then I went on to tell how that bit of snow went on and on, constantly increasing in size, just as the snow-balls grow when rolled along the school-yard, until at last the great mass could go tearing along, uprooting trees, and snatching up great boulders and working havoc generally.

After a long discussion, and a hurricane of questions and answers, a little hand was raised above one of the front desks. I looked down to see little Harry Stewart,—yes, that was his real name—a wee, innocent, round-eyed, freckled-faced laddie of seven, and the pet of the room, looking at me with his eyes rounder, it seemed, than usual. "What became of the little bird?" he wanted to know.

Now, year after year, the Women's Institute cannot but suggest, somewhat, an avalanche. Of course, the Institute is chiefly constructive (and it is the destructiveness of an avalanche that impresses most), but it is destructive also. "Ring out the old, ring in the new," has always been, in effect, one of its battle-cries, and, indeed, were that not so it could scarcely do the work that it is doing. "Put away bad methods," it says, "bring in better ones."—And it grows, and it grows, and it grows.

But what of "the little bird"? Well, Mr. Putnam did not exactly introduce the Women's Institute into Ontario, but he has been so closely identified with it, and from a time so near to its inception, that he may be very well recognized as, perhaps, the force which, above all others, set the organization rolling. Needless to tell those who attended the recent convention, that he is very much "Of" the organization yet. It has not swept him away as it might have done one with less tact or less ability for work of the kind. He is still the controlling and directing force, always ready where either work of destruction or of construction seems necessary, himself learning more, perhaps, as the years go by, of and from these 20,800 women who look to him as their institutional head, learning, yet ever ready with suggestion or advice.—This is noted for the benefit of those who do not belong to the Women's Institute, and who, consequently, may wonder how so vast an organization manages to preserve its unity.

The programme this year opened with the grand union meeting of the Women's Institute, the Fruit-growers', the Vegetable-growers', Bee-keepers', and Horticultural Associations in Convocation Hall, at which addresses were given by the Rev. A. H. Scott, Perth; Dr. C. C. James, Miss E. Stover, Hon. Mr. Burrell, Minister of Agriculture, and Hon. W. J. Hanna, Provincial Secretary, whose address had to be almost completely omitted owing to the lateness of the hour.

A most interesting feature of this programme was a presentation to Mr. Putnam of a beautiful gold watch and fob, as a token of appreciation from the Farmers' Institutes, the honors being done by Messrs. Grose and Groh.

Upon the following morning the

Women's Institute Convention proper was opened in the Guild Hall of the Young Women's Christian Association, McGill street, with Mrs. L. C. Burns, Caledonia, in the chair.

In her opening address, Mrs. Burns dwelt upon the development of the Women's Institute, from a sort of kitchen association in which cooking recipes were exchanged, into a great organization in which the principles of domestic science are taught, and all the important subjects of the day connected with the uplift of home and country are discussed. "How can we best advance the interests of our country?" she summarized, "and make of our homes the spots God meant them to be?" To attain these ends, the work must be distinctly educational. That the Institute might be successful in all such undertakings, she pointed out, great care must

a vision of what the movement was to mean. She could now heartily congratulate the Institute on its marvellous growth, and its development in high ideals. "For Home and Country," speaks the noblest message, and if the 20,800 members of the Women's Institute unite to achieve any object in connection with either, what may they not attain!

Among the objects with which women, and especially the National Council of Women (with which the Women's Institute is affiliated), are taking into their sphere of work, she mentioned the following, suggesting that the Women's Institute use its influence to bend public opinion in favor of the reforms suggested:

(1) For care of the feeble-minded. The National Council took up this question in 1891, and no pause should be

the Women's Institute should keep a lookout, taking steps to prevent the evil in their various districts.

(3) The Women's Institute can help by promoting the formation of local councils and uniting with them. In union is strength. There is a saying, "As goes the city, so goes the country"; women in both must unite to bring about better conditions. It was her opinion that one reform greatly needed is to change the tone of thought in regard to domestic service. Women's influence could quite solve the labor problem. We have had false standards in regard to all such work. Why not have labor schools for the training of mind, soul and body, along with instruction in domestic service, and so raise the general esteem for the work, surely as noble as any, of helping to make and maintain a home.

In conclusion, Mrs. Torrington congratulated the Convention on the excellence of the programme, which, she said, indicated that the city may in the future come to the country for advice. She wished the Institute success in its work, for what is material prosperity if we fail to keep up the standard of the country?

Miss M. V. Powell, Whithy, replied to the address of welcome. She felt that all must have derived inspiration from Mrs. Torrington's words, and also that the Women's Institute would be equal to that inspiration. The growth of the Institute had been strong, vigorous, and healthful, but to-day it stands before a future filled with possibilities. Its members are developing into women of thought, not mere household-workers; its interests are growing constantly wider. Everything that tends to extend the horizon should be encouraged. She looked forward to a day of votes for women.

Touching on the great central reason for the existence of the Women's Institute, the uplift of the home, she noted that success, as well as happiness, depends on home influences, our lives abroad being but a reflex of our lives at home. Every young woman should form an ideal for the home, of the spirit that makes it,—peace, love, charity, contentment. The homes determine the physical and moral health of every community, therefore, through them must come the general improvement of society. The responsibility of moulding the mind and character of the future men and women rests very greatly upon the mothers. One great work that the Women's Institute is doing is in spreading the reasonable ideal that the child should be developed rather than made over into a copy of someone else. It is realized that the child should be allowed to be himself, that different types of children require different treatment if they are to develop to the best of which they are capable, and that the receptivity of any child depends greatly upon the state of its health. The time is coming when the physician will be the hygienic adviser of the home rather than the mere curer of diseases. There will also be a new science of education, which will teach that all training should be for use and service, for finer citizenship, for the building of character, rather than for any less noble ends.

Home is the pivot on which the success of the nation depends, because the child depends upon it, therefore the Women's Institute should grasp the great possibilities of its work and its motto. Let us be consistent in the everyday of life. She who sows for her highest nature will reap that which will make her a rich-toned woman. Let the women of to-day not forget their duty to their country. Posterity calls to them. Let them train the girls—the home-builders.



Mrs. Horace W. Parsons.

Stewartleigh, Forest, Ont.

[One of the speakers.]

be exercised in choosing the officers; sound business methods must be observed; as many members as possible should be asked to take part in the meetings; and no unkind criticism must be indulged in. "Let us read and think, and observe the golden rule," she concluded. In her own districts, all the members were willing to contribute cheerfully because they were assured of sympathy.

Mrs. Torrington, who, in place of Mrs. Falconer, gave Toronto's address of welcome to the delegates, said that she had attended the first meeting of the Women's Institute in 1910, and had then caught

made until all the feeble-minded are cared for and segregated so that their kind cannot be propagated. Much to this end has been done lately; meetings have been held, and the Government memorialized asking for buildings to be used as homes for these unfortunates. The Women's Institute can help, e. g., by securing Dr. McMurchy's reports and circulating them, by publishing items in the local papers, and by asking municipal officers to take steps to prevent the marriage of defectives.

(2) The circulation of obscene papers and post cards. There are 50,000 of these now in circulation in Ontario, and