

## INCIDENTS OF EXTRA-PASTORAL WORK.

## II.

Some years after my ordination I was appointed by the Presbytery to dispense the Lord's supper in a vacant congregation about forty miles distant from my home. There were then no railroads in that part of the country, but the weather was fine and the roads good, and about the middle of the week preceding the Sabbath appointed, I proceeded thither drawn by my own good mare Jess, whose long and faithful services in carrying her owner through all his rounds of ministerial duty justly entitle her to the best future of which such are capable. When I was within about five miles of my place of destination, passing some men engaged in repairing the highway, one of them stopped me to say that there was a girl in the house I had just passed who had been for some time in deep distress about her spiritual condition, and the family would be glad if I would go in and converse with her. Every right-minded minister will judge how such an appeal would be responded to. I immediately turned back and, entering the house, was introduced to a girl younger than I had expected, being only thirteen or fourteen years of age. Without delay we entered upon the subject of her religious interest. On inquiring I learned that she had for some weeks been in a state of deep distress on account of her sins, but I also found that she had begun to "apprehend the mercy of God in Christ," and was emerging into the peace of the Gospel. It became my pleasant duty to endeavour, through the aid of the Spirit, to clear away any remaining obscurity in her views, to confirm and strengthen faith that was yet weak and to encourage her to go forward. Indeed, either then or at another interview I felt it my duty to recommend her to take the decided step of making a public profession of faith, which she did on the following Sabbath by joining with the Lord's people in the commemoration of His death.

And here a thought occurs to me, why is it that we nowadays so seldom or ever hear of cases of persons being for any time under such distress and anxiety regarding their salvation? We hear of persons being converted in large numbers, many of them seemingly without any period of conviction of sin, at all events without any depth of distress and alarm. Persons will go to a revival meeting with minds at ease, at the urgent solicitation of the leaders they will stand up to declare themselves on the side of Christ, and then they will be immediately numbered among the converts of such a meeting or such an evangelist, all this seemingly without any anxious feelings on account of personal guilt. It was certainly very different in former times. Our fathers would sometimes almost distrust the conversion of a man, in whose experience it had not been preceded by a period of distress under conviction of sin. Then books intended to clear the difficulties in the way of seekers after salvation were among the most valued of religious literature. For example in my young days, J. Angell James' "Anxious Inquirer Directed" was sold by the thousand and was eagerly perused. We venture to say that such books are now scarcely called for at all.

That there is such a difference I think will be manifest to all who can look back to a period forty years past, or who peruse the Christian biography, we might say, from the Puritan period up till the first half of the present century. One main reason, I think, is that there was more in the teachings, even of evangelical ministers, of what was called preaching the law. There was more setting forth the sterner attributes of God's character, as His righteousness and sovereignty, and there was not the proportionate exhibition of His grace and mercy.

In this we think they erred on the one hand, but yet we are often afraid that in a great deal of modern revivalism, or evangelism as it is often called, there is a serious error on the other, in the too exclusive exhibition of the love and grace of Christ. When we consider how much of the Bible is occupied with the exhibition of God as the righteous law giver, when we remember how the gracious Saviour commenced his ministry by setting forth the law of God in its purity and breadth—in a manner never before known, when we remember the apostle represents the purpose of the law, as producing the knowledge of sin (Rom. iii. 20), as shutting men up to the faith of Christ (Gal. iii. 23), and as our guide (N.V.) to bring us to Christ (v. 24); we may well consider whether much of our modern Christian effort is not lacking in the distinctive holding up of the righteousness of God and the purity and inflexibility of His law. Mr. Spurgeon compares this to attempting to run up a building before the foundation is laid and goes the length of saying that he believes that in this way much of modern evangelism does more harm than good.

But this is aside from my narrative. Before I left and afterward, I had reason to believe that the case of this girl was only one indication of a special work of the Spirit of God going on at that time in that community. A deep seriousness seemed to rest on the mind of the people, and either then or afterward a larger number of persons than was usual when congregations are vacant, made a profession of religion. The circumstances rendered this more remarkable. There had been no special meetings to awaken interest, from the scarcity of preachers the congregation had not had regular supply, and the former pastor after labouring amid coldness and indifference, had left discouraged, if not disposed to shake off the dust of his feet against them. These circumstances seemed strikingly to mark the whole as the doing of the Lord, and specially illustrates the sovereignty of the Spirit's operations. Shortly after, commissioners from the congregation being present at a meeting of Presbytery with a view to obtaining a

minister, one old father said jokingly to them, "Why you thrive best when you are without a minister." (But after all what of fruit was now gathered sprang from the seed that had been previously sown, and how much by the pastor whose labour seemed fruitless is only known to Him who said that "one soweth and another reapeth.")

It was several years before I again heard of this young convert. The congregation had in the meantime been connected with another Presbytery and I had not the same opportunities of hearing of her. But I have often since felt ashamed of myself that I was so long in enquiring about her. But when I did hear of her it was to receive a most gratifying account of her subsequent life. She was the oldest of the family and from that time she took a sort of motherly lead of the younger children, and I am led to believe that largely through her influence, one after another became a follower of the Saviour. Further, there was in her immediate neighbourhood a number of families in a state of utter religious indifference, I might almost say practical heathenism. She commenced missionary work among them, especially by gathering the children, who were growing up in the deepest ignorance, to instruct them in the ordinary branches of learning, but especially to train them for the Saviour. The missionary spirit continued to possess her. When I last heard of her she was engaged in teaching a mission school in San Francisco, I believe among the Chinese. I may add that a younger sister has been for several years an earnest and successful teacher in one of the Foreign Mission fields of our Church.

Two thoughts are suggested by these facts. First the influence of an older sister upon the younger members of the family. By her constant companionship with them, and the manner in which they are disposed to follow her leadership, I am inclined to believe that in many cases her influence is not even second to that of a mother. At all events it is powerful enough largely either to make or mar all the instructions of a parent, and proportionate must be the responsibility of such a position. Then secondly, we have here a beautiful example of the order in which religion in one heart diffuses itself around. As Andrew first findeth his own brother Peter and brought him to Jesus so she first sought the salvation of her family. Then as the woman of Samaria told to the men of her own city of the wonderful man who had told all her life, so she next labours for the welfare of the community around her. Then as these disciples went forth under the command to preach the Gospel to every creature, so her sympathies finally went forth to a world lying in the wicked one. May such a spirit more and more be found in all who name the name of Christ!

AN OLD PASTOR.

## HIGHER RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

MR. EDITOR,—I would take it as a very great favour if Sabbath schools would forward their intended contributions to the work of our committee as soon as possible after September 30. The committee will meet in Toronto about the middle of October, and I would like to be able to lay before them as favourable a financial statement as possible. We have gone forward so far in faith and have not been disappointed. Not a cent of obligation has yet been incurred for which there is not sufficient cash in hand. The larger part of our expenditure, however, lies before us, namely, the cost of postage, printing, diplomas, prizes and medals in connection with the scheme of Higher Religious Instruction. It would be a great satisfaction and encouragement if I could report a large portion of the funds already in hand. It would relieve the committee, and especially the Convener, of much needless anxiety, if our larger schools would remit their subscriptions now. Can you not kindly oblige us in the matter?

I am happy to say that the new scheme has been very favourably received by the Church generally. It will surprise some, I think, to learn that our smaller schools are most grateful for it. A Sabbath school with but twenty-three scholars, on a little island off the coast of New Brunswick, sent me \$1.65 in response to the cards asking for \$1. Another on the mainland close by, with thirty scholars, applied for more cards and sent \$3.07. Another in the heart of the Rockies, boasting of four teachers and twenty scholars, sends \$1. I find \$5 and \$10 frequent entries in my cash book. No school has sent less than \$1. Still only thirty-five have responded. The liberality of these is doubtless an indication of what is coming, but we would like if our friends would remit early so as to assure us of a sufficient revenue. If those who are yet to contribute emulate the generosity of those who have done so, we shall be able to present a balance on the right side next June.

We have been frequently asked, "How much do you require?" It is impossible to answer this with any degree of accuracy. Probably \$600 would meet all the present demands of our work. Were all the collecting cards sent out to return us fifty cents apiece, we should have about five times that sum. We do not think that more than one-fourth of our schools will respond this year. Will not other schools try and make up for some of the delinquents? I am sure that if superintendents and ministers could read the grateful expressions with which the letters I receive are filled—coming from fishing villages by the Atlantic, mining camps in the Rockies, and church-manses on the prairies of the North-West—they would realize more vividly the practical need to which this scheme has proved a welcome response.

Allow me to add that if any parts of the scheme are found obscure, or difficult to carry out, I would be glad to hear from those who consider them to be so.

T. F. FOTHERINGHAM, Convener.

## LETTER FROM TAMSUI.

The following letter from Rev. Dr. Mackay, Formosa, dated August 15, 1889, received by Rev. Dr. Wardrope, has been kindly forwarded for publication:

Although the preachers referred to in my last communication left, others have arrived, so there is no break in the teaching. Two promising young men are now assisting me. Believing as I do that every foreign and native labourer should be posted as well as possible in the Lord's work, every where between the North Pole and the South, I took up very especially this year the island world, and was anxious to give as much information as possible on: 1. Formation of each, volcanic or coral. 2. Surface and climate. 3. Natural productions, etc. 4. Ethnography, and very especially, 5, introduction of Christianity and the present state of the Lord's work amongst these isles of the seas. It is when making research, geological, etc., that one feels there is a great "Unknown" on this little planet of ours. The following is a list of most of the islands which were studied. I say studied. Not lots of stuff simply committed to memory. I might begin with Australia and state, etc. For once I give more, viz., Tasmania, New Zealand, Auckland, Antipodes, Chatham, Norfolk, New Caledonia, Loyalty, New Hebrides, Queen Charlotte, Solomon, Louisiade Archipelago, New Britain, New Ireland, Admiralty, New Guinea, Arroo, Timorlaut, Bonin, Ladrone, Caroline, Pelew (a boat from Pelew was drifted here years ago with twenty or thirty still living), Marshall, Gilbert, Sandwich, Ellice, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Cooks, Society, Austral, Tonamoton Marquesas, Gambier, Pitcairn, Easter, Philippine, Celebes, Moluccas, Borneo, Sunda, Formosa, Loochoo (many have been here), Japan, Oparo, Laccadives, Madagascar, Labuan, Iceland, Knakatoo (I have pumice-stone from there gathered soon after the awful eruption), Trinidad, Bermudas, Bahamas, Andaman and many more.

A man can't be broad and noble without casting his eyes over all lands more or less. It does all good here thus to see the triumphs of the same Gospel under the same banner in these isles of the seas.

Besides, we traced the lines of church history from the Day of Pentecost down through storm and calm, darkness and light, persecution and toleration, to our own day. We went over the ground by centuries so that clear and definite land-marks might be impressed on every mind.

Physics, with as many experiments as we could at the time arrange, was entered into with great spirit.

"Natural Law in the Spiritual World," by Drummond, I presented to them in substance, telling them about the author. The older preachers have had such varied experience in studying nature around them that nearly all was relished with a zest that would astonish some westerners. "Biogenesis," "Growth," "Degeneration," "Environment," etc., were thoroughly enjoyed.

Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" took five days and nights of our time. All read and studied every day till about four p.m. Then each selected a character to represent at our evening meeting, e.g.: one delivered the substance of what Christian said, another, what Obstinate uttered, and another Pliable, etc. Thus we went through the book, making it ten-fold more instructive and interesting for preachers, wives, children, etc. To have students speak every night on the platform on the subject under discussion is part of our method of teaching. Cramming is absolutely unknown. May it never show its ugly face in Oxford College, Tamsui.

What these men study they know, and have what they know at command. They don't look back as though having gone over a subject and yet all seemingly like a dream. Not so.

To "know thyself" is never neglected. The human system, its maladies and cures, etc., all are studied as being exceedingly important.

To have a smattering of French and German, Latin and Greek, and not understand the heart and lungs, liver and stomach, blood and brains, is truly lamentable. From two to ten students go every day to the hospital during dispensing hours. Last month I was there every day with eight. If at Tamsui I am nearly always present during operations. Another doctor is coming out from Scotland to be Dr. Rennie's assistant, and live near Bang-kah, and have a hospital under Government control, which simply means the Government pays \$200 per month and all employees must be attended to. It will be a great relief to us here.

You will observe that since New Year's we have been working in the way indicated above for our Lord and Master, without a day's vacation, for the college is full as ever, and thus the work goes on.

Eighty more geological specimens have been given me, and are also from London, Eng.

Mrs. Mackay has put in a hard year's work in the girl's school, but by-and-by she will write herself. Jamieson is back from Palm Island, and is much better.

N.B.—I have gained a complete victory over the plottings of Spanish priests at Chin-Nih. After two months of swagging they are ashamed to go into the streets. Why won't Canada at this time rally around the old banner, and once and for all show the monster of iniquity that Canada, young and vigorous, will never submit to Romish rule and priest-craft plottings. May she arise in the full strength of her might united as one, and stem the tide of iniquity in Quebec Province. Yours sincerely,

G. S. MACKAY.

Tamsui, Aug. 15, 1889.