

JAPAN AFFAIRS.

The stenographic report of the "Proceedings re Japan Affairs" at the annual meeting of the General Board of Missions of the Methodist Church, held in Montreal, October 3rd to 11th 1895, and published by authority of the Board, is a bulky document of two hundred large folio pages. In view of the involved nature of the Japan difficulty this exhaustive report is of great importance to every supporter of the Missionary Society. By reading the document they can be, as it were, present at the meeting, hear all that was said, and be possessed of all the reasons for the action that was taken. We hope that this will be an end to all controversy on this subject. The Board virtually called upon all persons aggrieved or otherwise affected to then speak or forever after hold their peace.

This report contains reading-matter sufficient to fill 600 pages of this magazine. We have felt it our duty to study it fully, and we cannot refrain from the expression of the profound conviction that no other decision than that arrived at by the Missionary Board was possible. We are also convinced that the administration of the Missionary Department, including its Secretary, Executive and Board, has been wise, kind and considerate throughout.

Our Japan work, the earliest of our foreign missions, has been most successful, and has contributed not a little to the making of that New Japan which has astonished the world. The differences which have arisen in Japan in the presence of the organized paganism of the great Empire ought never to have occurred: and by the exercise of more tact and skill and patience, and subordination to the Missionary Board, which is the controlling voice of the Church in these matters, would never have occurred.

The Methodist Church cannot be too thankful to the large-minded and able members of that Board, both lay and clerical, who, year after year, have devoted so large an amount of time and unpaid labour to the administration of its affairs. If any contributors to its funds have any doubt whatever on this subject we earnestly exhort them to procure this Report and examine the documents before the Board, the discussion which took place upon them, and the wise conclusions reached. Let the dead past bury its dead. Let the Church move forward with a united front, with a consecrated zeal for a new crusade for the glory of God and salvation of souls.

THE COVENANT SERVICE.

This exceedingly solemn and impressive service has been held in nearly all our churches on the first Sunday of the New Year. Impressive though it be, it might be made, we think, still more so if it were brought more in harmony with our joyous Methodist theology. This form of covenant was written by the eminent Joseph Aleme, the author of "An Alarm to the Unconverted," an old puritan divine, who died in 1668. It breathes rather the rigid Puritanism of that austere age than the more congenial and sunny religious feeling which should pervade, and which largely does pervade, our religious meetings. It was adopted by Mr. Wesley thirty-seven years before his death, when he had not yet shaken off the somewhat ascetic cast of mind of his earlier years. In his sunny old age his habit of thought and speech greatly mellowed and sweetened.

The form still in use strikes us as more a covenant of works than one of grace. It is more like the indenture of a bond-servant than the glad some marriage covenant of the soul with the heavenly Bridegroom. The austere legalism of this covenant will be noticed in a few phrases. "Which wilt thou have, either the crown or the curse? If thou chooseth the crown, remember that the day thou takest this, thou must be content to submit to the cross and yoke, the service and the sufferings of Christ which are linked to it. What sayest thou? Hadst thou rather take the pains and pleasure of sin, and venture on the curse? Or wilt thou yield thyself to Christ, and so make sure of the crown?"

It emphasizes, in Puritan-wise, the stern duties of service and not the glad obedience of adopted children and heirs of grace and glory. "Servants, as they must do their master's work, so they must do that work which their Master appoints them." "Let my dwelling be in the dust, my portion in the wilderness, my name and lot amongst the hewers of wood and drawers of water, among the door-keepers of Thy house; anywhere, where I may be serviceable."

This is all true, but it is not the whole truth, and we think the emphasis is wrongly placed. We do not think that such a covenant expresses "the essence of Christianity" as it claims to do. "Love is the fulfilling of the law"—"To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and mind, and soul and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves." On the first Sunday of the year we should come to the house of God, not so much in the