

## Our Contributors.

### TWO MEETINGS THAT SHOULD BE BETTER ATTENDED.

BY KNOXIAN.

Thousands of Ontario men and women, who were Ontario boys and girls thirty years ago, remember Lachlin Taylor. They remember him chiefly as agent of the Bible Society, and a capital agent he was. If there was any latent life in the church-going people in any town or village he could fan it into a flame that burnt brightly enough, at least, as long as the annual meeting of the Bible Society lasted.

#### BIBLE SOCIETY MEETINGS

are not what they once were. We can remember when the annual meeting of the Bible Society was one of the principal events that occurred in a town or village during the year. Every body went, and every body felt an interest in the proceedings. The local clergymen were all present, and Lachlin Taylor worked up the enthusiasm in fine style. After Mr. Taylor came the Rev. Mr. Ball. Mr. Ball was one of the best platform speakers in the Province. He had some admirable speeches on the Bible Society's operations, and did capital work. It was a treat to hear him at a lively Bible Society meeting. Few public speakers of those days were Mr. Ball's equals, and some of his best work was done for the Bible Society. We distinctly remember a little knot of boys and girls counting the days that must pass before the Bible Society meeting would be held. They were no more interested in such matters than boys and girls brought up in Christian homes usually are; but they expected an enjoyable meeting. How many boys and girls in Ontario watch for a Bible Society meeting now? The boys and girls of the present day have just as much interest in their Bibles as the boys and girls of twenty-five or thirty years ago. The difference is not in them—the difference is in the Bible Society meeting. In towns and villages in which the Bible Society meeting used to be an important event it is now one of the poorest meetings held during the whole year. The attendance is small, though all the Churches are supposed to be represented. There is no enthusiasm. Exceptions, of course, there are. Once in a while one meets a minister who says that the annual meeting of the Bible Society in his town was a good meeting—good in the matter of attendance, good in spirit, with a good collection, good speeches and good in every way; but we fear these good Bible Society meetings are an exception.

How can we account for the change that has taken place in so many localities? It has not been brought about by local causes. Many of the branches are managed by the men who managed their affairs when the meetings were successful. Where changes have been made, the present officials are quite as efficient as their predecessors. As a rule the officers of a branch of the Bible Society are the very best men in their localities. They are the best men in the Churches they represent. They are chosen just because they are the best men. Many of them are among the most efficient workers in their own Churches. The blame certainly does not lie at their door if the annual meeting is a failure.

Do the people take less interest in the Bible now than they did a quarter of a century ago? There is a good deal of talk just now about the use of the Bible in our public schools. It would be interesting to know how many Bible Society meetings some of the talkers have attended in the last ten years. There are those who contend that the young people who are growing up in Ontario have not the same love for their Bibles as their fathers and grandfathers had, and that lack of interest in the Bible causes lack of interest in the Bible Society meeting. The value of this contention is easily tested. Are Bible Society meetings well attended where the Old Country elements predominate, and poorly attended where native Canadians are in a large majority? If this can be shown, then the contention has force. We have never met any body who can show it. There may be truth in the contention, but the truth has never, so far as we know, been made apparent.

What then is the reason why the Bible Society meeting is not well attended? It will not do to look wise and say, "Oh, the people never go to meetings now as they used to go." They go to some

meetings in larger numbers than they ever went. Political meetings have never been so largely attended as they have been during the last six months. Can the State hold a more attractive meeting than the Churches? Are people more anxious to hear about the N. P. and the Pacific Railway than they are about the operations of the Bible Society? If the Bible Society agents discussed their questions in as attractive a way as some of the politicians handle questions at their big meetings, would it be so hard for local men to get up a good Bible Society meeting?

#### THE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The time at which annual congregational meetings are usually held is drawing near. It is always an anxious time for pastors and office-bearers. There is anxiety about the balance—anxiety about the reports, anxiety about the attendance, and truth to say there is sometimes more or less anxiety lest some of the brethren say or do unpleasant things. Some men never think a congregational meeting a success unless they go home swinging somebody's scalp in their hand.

One good way to make a congregational meeting pass off smoothly and pleasantly is to have the work well prepared a few days before the meeting takes place. No small part of the friction that sometimes arises at congregational meetings is caused by bringing the business before the meeting in a crude, unprepared state. Many office-bearers have their own business to attend to—some have a hard fight for bread and butter, and cannot give as much time to Church business as they would like. Still, for the sake of a good meeting, every good man ought to be willing to make a special effort. Such meetings usually come but once a year.

And at the present time, before congregational meetings begin, would it not be well for every body to refresh his memory with the fact that the work is the Lord's work, and should be done in the best possible manner? Devotional study of the one hundred and thirty-third Psalm would also help.

#### CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION AT NEW GLASGOW, N. S.

A pamphlet on our table records at length the proceedings at a meeting of the congregation of James Church, New Glasgow, N. S., for the purpose of calling up the memories of the past, recounting all the way in which God has led them and their fathers, setting up landmarks, and taking a new departure in the pathway of progress and consecrated endeavour. \* Rev. G. W. Underwood, one of the elders, occupied the chair. The report of the meeting in the local newspaper, the *Eastern Chronicle*, gives an extended list of names of members of the Presbyteries of Pictou, Truro and Wallace, who were present, and also of representative men from congregations in the near neighbourhood and at a distance, who themselves or their fathers had held relations more or less close with the present or past organization of James Church. To give even a brief synopsis of the contents of the record, extending over no less than sixty one pages, would do no justice to the subject, and would far exceed the space at our disposal. We must, therefore, be content with making a few prominent points.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the church derives its name from that of its first pastor. Early in the year 1786 the Rev. James McGregor, afterward a Doctor of Divinity, in response to urgent calls from the settlers, largely from his own country, who, not many years before, had taken up their residences around Pictou Harbour, and on the East, Middle and West Rivers, consented to cast in his lot with his fellow-countrymen and others dwelling "solitarily in the wood," and minister to them in those valued Gospel ordinances which they had enjoyed in their native lands. He arrived at Halifax in June of the same year, and at once set out for his appointed field of labour. It is difficult for us, at this advanced period, with all our great facilities for moving from place to place, to realize the conditions of travel in regions for miles upon miles through unbroken forest, with nothing to guide the way but the compass or the blaze upon the trees made by some enterprising explorer. Such were the conditions under which Dr. McGregor had

\*Proceedings at the Centennial Celebration of James Church, New Glasgow, N. S., September 17, 1886. With appendices.

to find his way to the scene of his life's work, and with which, in a somewhat modified form, he had for a good while to contend. If not the first, he was among the first Presbyterian ministers in the Dominion of Canada, and certainly, if not the first, he was at least the second to unfurl the Presbyterian banner at the foot of the eastern slope of the highlands which divide the waters of the beautiful Bay of Fundy from those of the majestic and not less beautiful Gulf of St. Lawrence. For many years, sharing the privations and hardships of the people among whom he lived, he had laboured alone; and it was not until 1795 that he was cheered by the arrival of the Rev. Duncan Ross and the Rev. John Brown, the former to take charge of the Pictou and West River portions of his large parish, leaving him free to bestow his labours on the East River, which was his home from the beginning, and where he worked to the end, and the latter to take charge in the distant region of Londonderry. Seventeen years after his arrival in Pictou he was again made glad by the coming of the learned and accomplished Dr. Thomas MacCulloch, the great educator of the Church. Dr. MacCulloch seemed to comprehend at once the urgency, immediate and prospective, of the demand for ministers to keep pace with the spiritual requirements of a growing population, and with a heroism that cannot be over-estimated, set himself to the apparently hopeless task of providing the means of a liberal education, with a view to the Gospel ministry and other professions, for the youth of the land, apart from the exclusiveness of the only other institution of higher learning in the Province, and under the control of a then publicly declared Established Church, and who, in little more than twenty years after his arrival, had the high gratification of achieving a phenomenal success, and seeing three of his first graduates crowned with the honestly earned honours of the old University of Glasgow, and many others qualified to occupy spheres of usefulness both in Church and State.

But we must return. The incumbency of the first minister of James Church was over forty-four years, and, in the language of one who sixty years ago was a member of his congregation, "after having lived to surmount the more arduous labours and perils and privations of pioneer life, and to see around him smiling fields, happy homes and a flourishing Church, without the shadow of a blot upon his good name through a long and busy life, he was 'gathered to his fathers,' amid the heartfelt regrets of a deeply-attached and sorrowing people." For a full account of the life and labours of Dr. McGregor we must refer to the memoir of his grandfather, published seven and twenty years ago by the Rev. Dr. George Patterson, of New Glasgow.

Of the second pastor, the Rev. Dr. David Roy, all that is necessary to say just now is that he found things very much "made ready to his hand" on his induction into the pastorate, in 1831, and that for forty years, with energy and zeal, he preached the old Gospel until laid aside by age and infirmity, not long before his death.

The celebration must have been of absorbing interest to the congregation at large, as the history of its past and its present was unfolded under the graphic and facile pen of Mr. D. C. Fraser, Barrister-at-Law, and an honoured elder of the Church, and that interest must have been vastly intensified to the ancients, the select seven—seven only—occupying a conspicuous place in the audience, who were members in full standing under the first pastor.

It would not be right to omit saying that the celebration was redeemed from monotony as the history of a single congregation, by the range of subjects bearing upon the condition of things generally, in the interest of the Church, embraced in the programme and upon which papers of more than ephemeral value were furnished. Of these our notice must be very brief, and it would be invidious to institute any close comparisons where all are so exceptionally excellent. The paper of the Rev. E. A. McCurdy, the pastor since 1871, occupying eight pages, on "The early settlement of Pictou, and the position of civil, social and ecclesiastical affairs a hundred years ago," is a condensed, life-like picture of things as they were. No less distinguished, for careful and exhaustive statement, is "The planting of Presbyterianism in Pictou, and its progress prior to 1817," by the Rev. Dr. Wm. MacCulloch, the son of the distinguished Dr. Thomas MacCulloch, and, for nearly half a century, pastor of