

Sights and Insights.

BY W. N. HUTCHINS.

At every turn of events in his national history the Hebrew was conscious of the presence of God in national life. The Baptist gathering at Winnipeg was national, a Convention that proceeded under the consciousness that nations not less than individuals possess a character with its attendant responsibility, destiny and relationship to God. When one looked upon the country with its valleys and prairies, with its rivers and lakes, with its mountains and mines, he saw it illumined and colored by the Convention. When we partook of the Convention, with its ideals and discussions, with purposes and resolutions, we beheld it under the glow of the country. The country absorbed the Convention. The Convention absorbed the country. As Baptists we rose to a sense of a national life and a national mission.

MATERIAL IMPRESSIONS.

Winnipeg's first impression was made by its mud—deep, dirty, slippery, sticky mud—a good soil for wheat and a good soil for clothes. But Winnipeg has more than mud. There are fine public buildings and business blocks, and beautiful homes and attractive churches, together with spacious streets and lawns and boulevards, that made our Eastern eyes open wide with wonder and wicked wishes when we remembered the congested streets and contiguous houses at home. Then, too, there was a refinement and sanity and moderation utterly alien to that wild and woolly west which false friends had led us to expect. And what shall we say of the Baptists of Winnipeg? They did us proud, so proud that we wished they numbered more, and we sighed when the list of Sunday appointments was read and we listened to the long roll of churches of other denominations so much outnumbering us.

THE GREAT CONVENTION.

We use the word advisedly. For great it was by universal testimony, great in breadth of vision, in the idealism of its proceedings, in sanity of judgment, in enlightened intelligent utterance, in sincerity of purpose and nobility of earnestness. Men of experience did not hesitate to compare it with great national and international religious gatherings.

HORIZON.

When the late Alexander Grant visited our Maritime Convention he gave us the word horizon. That, too, was the word of the Winnipeg Convention. The horizon was lifted. But strange to say our first feeling under this new horizon was a sense of contiguity and closeness. Do you think we were away from home at Winnipeg? Not all. Maritime men were always at our elbows. We saw their hand in the inception of the Convention, they spoke to us from nearly every platform, they gave breadth and strength and unction to its deliberations. Our delegation numbered twenty-five, but these were supplemented by a host of forerunners who started west months and years ago. In June the class of '91 of Acadia held a reunion at Wolfville, and as many of the class were at Winnipeg as mustered at Wolfville. About twenty-five of Acadia's graduates were present through the session of the Convention. Without wonder then, we felt a sense of contiguity and closeness.

But the uplifting of the horizon affected another result. We saw farther than ever before. The Convention gave a breadth of vision. There was the bigness of the country, a bigness that grew upon us as we swept on, eating and sleeping, sleeping and eating, day after day; the miles rolling up and we continuing to go. But more broadening than this was the largeness of the work, with its diversity of interests, multiplicity of organizations and variety of plant, presented in the Conventions. Who can think of Acadia and her affiliated institutions without a largeness of thought? But add to Acadia McMaster, Moulton, Woodstock, Brandon, and the prospective college in British Columbia, with their history and high service, and what must be the effect? Some of us never attend our Maritime Convention without returning with an intensified sense of the greatness of our work. But add to the work of the Maritime Provinces the work of Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, the Territories and British Columbia, and no man could be small with this breadth of work before him. I know one delegate at Winnipeg who never thought before of Ontario as a home mission field. Yet in the last ten years and a half 102 chapels have been built, 87 churches have been organized, over 9,000 persons have been baptized, 47 churches have become self-supporting, while offerings for Home missions have trebled in the last fifty years. Then add to Ontario, Québec, where our work has become so large that last year Grande Ligne was compelled to reject students because of insufficient accommodation; and Manitoba and the Territories, where, in 25 years, about to self-supporting and 70 mission churches have come into being; and British Columbia, where the population has doubled in the last four or five years, where now we have nine where three years ago we had only two self-supporting churches, and where the offerings for Baptist Home Mission work exceeded by twenty times the offerings of five years ago. God spoke to us in the National Convention and his word was "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields," and as we looked our vision widened.

Then how could the horizon lift without one being taught a lesson in proportion. One needs to be acquainted with other interests and to feel the pressure of other needs than his own before he has a correct unit of measurement. One who knows Grande Ligne and only Grande Ligne does not know Grande Ligne. The man who is an educationalist and only an educationalist is not an educationalist. To know the work of the Maritime Provinces one must know more than the Maritime Provinces. Comparison is a great teacher, and one of the educational features of the Convention was the opportunity it gave and the necessity it put upon one of seeing varied interests in their true proportions, and of adjusting them in their right relations.

UNIFICATION.

The National Baptist Convention was in keeping with the spirit of the day. The key word of the business world is unification—sometimes finding realization in the co-operative store, factory, or institution, and again in the less desirable form of a trust or syndicate. Unification too is the national watchword. History is moving to imperialism and there is no indication that the movement will cease until unification is completed. Likewise the religious world is tending to unification, a federation of churches of the same denomination and a family fellowship of the different denominations. As Canadian Baptists we have been too isolated and provincial. But today, thanks to the National Convention, we are closer together. It was a great thing to become acquainted. Men who were names before are brothers now. Mutual esteem was begotten and friendships have been formed which will foster a broad brotherly spirit reaching from ocean to ocean. Those who looked for unity of organization as the outcome of this gathering will be disappointed. No wholesale merging of organizations was suggested or contemplated. The integrity of the Convention was left undisturbed. Yet unification was effected, a unification which is national and spiritual, a unification which will make us Canadian instead of Provincial Baptists, with Canadian problems and Canadian interests, and Canadian institutions, and a Canadian strength.

SPIRITUALITY.

In its spirituality the Convention was deep and strong. One met nothing of physical emotion, and heard no words that strove for passing effect. But there was an earnestness of utterance, a depth of conviction, a frankness of discussion, a desire for light, and a humility of spirit worthy of the Convention and indicative of the presence of the life of God in our midst. I watched in vain for a false note, for a word that jarred with the Word of God and was not true to Jesus Christ. In the absence of executive power the Convention was rich in sermons, addresses and discussions, and not a word was spoken which did not do homage to our crucified and risen Lord.

TID BITS.

Rev. Dr. Spencer of Brantford, on behalf of the B. Y. P. U. of his church, presented Rev. A. J. Vining with a cheque for \$200, to build the first Galician Baptist church.

Rev. D. G. MacDonald announced that he recently baptized the first convert among the Galicians.

During the Convention Rev. Ralph Trotter received a telegram from a young man not a Christian—Have just made \$500. Shall I deposit it in your name for church purposes? Mr. Trotter replied in the affirmative.

There are 75 towns in British Columbia with a population from 100 to 2500 without a Baptist pastor.

At the laying of the corner stone of Brandon College, over \$1300 was obtained for the institution.

According to the Baptist statistician, the Baptists of Canada have increased from 600 in 1800, to 100,000 in 1900.

THE HEAVENLY FATHER.

The Heavenly Father: or, God's Relation to Man.

HENRY T. COLESTOCK.

Not unfrequently, in large orchestras, there are musicians of various nationalities, French, German, Hungarian, Russian, or Italian, sitting side by side. Before the music begins they are unable to speak one another's language. This, however, is only an incidental barrier; for as soon as the music begins, they speak to one another in a universal language which appeals to every human heart, as they interpret the emotions of joy and sorrow, hatred and love.

So there is a universal language in pictures. The Angelus tells its pathetic story to multitudes who could not read it if written in a single language of words.

For the most part our Saviour taught in a universal language. Here, it is the shepherd after his sheep; here, the woman after her coin; the farmer sowing grain into various kinds of soil; the yeast in the meal; the new wine in old bottles; the sick man by the roadside; the beggar at the rich man's gate; the true father receiving with loving welcome the son who had wasted his living. These word pictures speak to us in a universal language. Jesus wishes to teach his disciples about God. He is wiser than the Rabbis who attempt to set forth the char-

acter of God in abstract terms. He calls to his aid the tender relations of the home; he presents a cameo in bas-relief in which he interprets and unfolds his own idea of God; he bids his disciples think of God as their heavenly Father.

The conception of Jesus, that God is man's heavenly Father, implies a relationship between God and man. Is this relationship natural or acquired? Is it universal or restricted to a certain privileged class? In other words, who has a right, according to the teaching of Jesus, to call God Father?

For our present purpose we may classify all people as Christians, little children, and non-Christians. What is God's relation to each of these classes?

Surely if to any one God is the heavenly Father it is to the Christian. By the Christian is not meant, of course a person free from faults or even free from sin. The term includes all who are learners of Christ, whether they have advanced far or little in the school of the Master. In teaching the disciples to say "Our Father," Christ addressed Peter, who afterward denied his Lord; and John, who wanted to call down fire from heaven and consume a whole village of people because they would not receive his Master; and James, who wanted one of the first places in the new kingdom. If we knew the other disciples better it is quite probable that they were as imperfect as the ones we know best.

Yet Christ taught these men to look up and call God their heavenly Father. These men were learners of Christ, they were often slow of heart and dull of comprehension, often sinful and unworthy. But God was their Father. It is the same today. As learners in the school of Christ we are often unworthy of our Master; we fall before temptations; we deny our Lord at times; still Christ would teach us to say "Our Father."

But is God the Father only to the Christian? Before we reply let me draw the curtain from one of the most heavenly sights that earth affords. The shadows of night are beginning to fall. The mother bird gathers her young under her protecting wing. In the cottage the supper is over, and two little children are kneeling at their mother's side, and she is teaching them to pray. Without attempting to listen we catch the words hushed after the mother; they are, "Our Father, who art in heaven." All her mother-instinct impels her to teach her children to say "Our Father." She does not stop to think whether they are among the number of the "elect" or not. She knows nothing of that system of doctrine called Christian, but which would make all children not "elect" sure candidates for destruction; she has never heard of that pre-Reformation theology which regards a child lost if he has not been baptized. This mother is simple and untaught. She has read the Bible some and has found peace and forgiveness by believing in Jesus Christ. Jesus is her Master and Lord. She knows that he took up little children in his arms and blessed them, and said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Surely nothing is truer than this mother's instinct which prompts her to teach her children to say, "Our Father."

We may say, then, that it is right for Christians to call God "Our Father," and for mothers to teach their little ones nestling at their knees to say "Our Father"; but how about the great number of people who are neither Christians and who are no longer children? Is God their Father?

The little boy grows to be a young man, and becomes indifferent to religion, gets into bad company and sorely tries his mother's heart. Partly because his associates, are irreligious, and partly because religion, in his mind is merely a preparation for heaven, which he can attend to any time before he dies, he begins sowing his "wild oats." He will enjoy himself while he is young; of course, it is his intention to settle down and join the church by and by.

His employment takes him to a distant city. He soon finds his "set." They show him about. They take a certain pride in initiating him into all forms of dissipation. He spends his wages in gambling and for drink. Other cups of dissipation and vice are drained to the dregs. He loses his position, becomes without money and without friends.

What shall we say about this young man who has so sinned against his mother's love? Does the mother love him any less? Only you who have never heard a mother pray for her erring boy can answer that she loves him less for having wandered away in the paths of sin. He writes to her no more; but she hears occasionally of his sad and sinful doings. How she suffers! What would she not give to receive a letter from him and see again at the top the words: "Dear Mother." Nothing could cause her greater joy. How she longs to hold him once more to her heart.

The young man gets sick and is taken to the hospital. Here he has time to think; and like another young man he also came to himself. He resolves to go back to his mother. She receives him with open arms; her son who had been lost is found, who had been worse than dead to her is alive again. And if a mother knows how to treat an erring child, how much more the heavenly Father!

When viewed in the light of Christ's teaching and in-