

in the "Mission" or in the churches to which they belong, College St. and Parliament St. especially, two of our number occupying the position of Secretary and Librarian of the Mission Schools. "Our Bible Class" desire as young men to prepare for active work, and ask the prayers of all interested upon, both teachers and scholars to this end.

R. MCJ.

Practical Address.

THE WORK A BAPTIST PROVINCIAL SABBATH SCHOOL CONVENTION SHOULD DO.

BY PROF. J. MONTGOMERY, B. SC.

It has been said that we live in an age of conventions. There are social conventions, political conventions, religious conventions, scientific conventions, etc. Each department under these several heads has its convention also. It is certain, therefore, that conventions are fashionable. It would even seem that many people think that little or nothing can be done without them. We believe, however, that while, in some cases, men have gone to extremes in regard to this matter, there are good and sufficient reasons for conventions, and especially for the S. S. conventions. They undoubtedly have, and still do serve, an eminently useful purpose.

The Convention Idea.

Suppose that two superintendents of some backwoods village meet some day on the street, and proceed to exchange ideas about Sunday-school matters; and, for simplicity, let us suppose that each has twelve ideas about Sunday-school work. (I am afraid some workers do not have so many.) Superintendent No. 1 gives his twelve ideas. Superintendent No. 2 says: "Six of your ideas I had before, but six are new to me, and besides I have six ideas that are different from yours," which he proceeds to give. Superintendent No. 1 then says: "I have two difficulties in my school; the first I have overcome, the second I have not overcome. My difficulties are so and so. I overcame the first by such and such means." Superintendent No. 2 now says: "I have the same difficulties but I have not overcome the first. I now see how I may overcome it. The second difficulty I overcame in such a way." Each man has now six ideas that he did not have before, and each knows how to overcome a difficulty he could not overcome before. That is, they have had a little Sunday-school convention. They have exchanged ideas, they have learned how to overcome difficulties they have both been encouraged, and have both had their enthusiasm increased. Now is this not what is done in most Sunday-school conventions, only on a larger scale? Exchange of ideas, removal of difficulties, encouragement, and enthusiasm are some of the main results. These results are reached by the discussion of subjects, the reading of papers, by teaching model classes, by blackboard exercises, by singing, etc. Now while this is exceedingly important in itself, and worth many times over the expense attending an annual meet-

ing, I do not think it constitutes the chief work of a provincial convention. Let us then inquire what the character of the work is that should be expected of a regular Baptist Provincial S. S. Convention, in Ontario.

OBJECTS.—1. Co-operation and Increased Interest.

I conceive the first object to be to devise some means of securing the co-operation, and of awakening the interest, and arousing the sympathy of, not a few local associations, but of all Sunday-school workers in the denomination in regard to the highest objects and best methods of procedure in Sunday-school operations. I do not believe these ends can be attained without some recognised head, without a common ground upon which all may stand, without our becoming better acquainted with each other and each other's work. All these requisites a Provincial Convention, if rightly managed, would supply. No associational convention could do this, simply because it would not be recognised as above any other associational convention; not that I intend to suggest any arbitrary subjection to be enforced, but I mean that a well managed Provincial Convention, by deserv- ing, and therefore commanding the respect of the denomination, would, in time, secure these ends.

2. Collection of Statistics.

The second object of the Provincial Convention I shall name, is the collection of statistics. If statistics are worth anything, they ought to be used. In many cases they are merely collected, and are never used even in the place where collected. They are scarcely ever known outside of the association where collected. In some instances they are not preserved. Too frequently they are not adequately distributed, and too generally they are not available to Sabbath-school workers. What we want is some way of doing this work so that all Sunday-school workers of the denomination may know both in and out of these associational conventions what is being done. This can only be done by some recognised head, board, or committee. We need a man that can collect, compare, condense, tabulate, arrange, and send forth the facts in such a form and manner that they will attract attention and exert their legitimate influence.

3. Improved Methods.

The third object a Provincial Convention should aim at, comprises the preparation of the Sunday-school teacher for his duties. I do not think we can overrate the importance of this work. Without stopping to discuss the subject I may mention that other denominations are laying a great deal of stress upon it. Normal classes and teachers' institutes are everywhere in vogue. If we keep abreast of the times we must fit for this work. Fine Sunday-school rooms, blackboard exercises, maps and mottoes, charts and pictures, will have their influence; but the Sunday-school whose teachers know most about the Bible, and who know best how to teach it, who understand the most thoroughly its institutes and feel most its power, is the Sunday school that will do, after all, the most effective work for the Master. It is to give teachers these qualifications that the rightly managed normal class, or properly conducted teachers' institute aims at. We fit ourselves for other work; why not fit ourselves for

all-important work of teaching God's Word? Local conventions may make provision for normal classes and teachers' institutes in their own associations, but they can do but little towards securing a general interest in such work. Local conventions cannot often avail themselves of the best talent. A Provincial Convention ought in time to arrange for normal class work and institutes throughout the whole Province; and further, it ought to command the best talent of the denomination, and arrange to give all of our Sunday-school workers the benefit of that talent.

4. Supervision of Publications.

A fourth object for the attention of the Provincial Convention is the various publications for Sunday-school purposes. We have heard something of the power of Sunday-school literature for good and for evil from Dr. Fyfe. It is certain that some sort of control over our Sabbath-school literature must be obtained without in any way abridging that freedom that all Baptists love. Good, and thoroughly reliable literature, literature that would teach truth and not error, that would cultivate the taste, not vitiate it, that would strengthen the mind, not weaken it, that would give faithful representations of life and duty and responsibility, and not distorted views of them, is what is wanted, and should be placed within the reach of all. I believe the Provincial Convention might have a committee that would give us the benefit of the best talent, taste and judgment of the denomination, to examine and recommend a list of books that would be worthy of a place in our Sunday-school libraries. There are many Sunday-schools that have no one really fit to select books or judge of the influence that books exert. Some Sunday-schools appoint committees to select books, but in most cases these committees are composed of young people of immature judgment and uncultivated taste, who have, in fact, little or no acquaintance with literature of any form. Now, such a committee as I have suggested ought to command the respect and confidence of all desiring books, and I have no doubt but that many would rejoice to have a well recommended list of Sunday-school books to select from. I am aware that such a plan would be attended with some difficulties, but I think they might all be surmounted. I am certain that all would not be satisfied with the selections, however good; I do not think, however, that these things would materially affect the good results that would flow from such a course. It is possible that music might receive some attention. It is certain that many Sunday-school hymns, while teaching nothing, nonsense or error, serve no other end than can be conceived of. But on this topic I must leave. Music is a subject that requires such delicate handling, it is such dangerous ground to tread upon, and is pregnant with such an extraordinary amount of trouble, and is fraught with difficulties so intricate and incomprehensible, that I think my only safe course is to let it severely alone.

How a Provincial Convention may Secure these Ends.

These I conceive to be some of the objects to which a Provincial Convention should direct its attention. The time is nearly past when Sunday-school workers may meet and

*An address delivered at the Baptist S. S. Convention held in Aylmer, Ont., June 1878.