

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY PHILADELPHIA

MY DEAR MRS. THORNBURN. Will you allow me to give you a short account of my visit to Philadelphia, in the shape of a letter, rather than as a formal paper. I think I can write the one more easily than the other, and you are quite at liberty to "cut and carve" upon it as you like.

I had enjoyed delightful intercourse with many friends on their way to the great gathering, but it was not till within a few hours of starting that I decided upon going myself. The pleasure was probably enhanced by being unexpected. I left home on Tuesday morning, Sept. 22nd, at 9 a.m. With a pleasant party of "delegated" Toronto friends, a day of bright sunshine, and a route of great interest and beauty, the journey of about thirty hours was most enjoyable. By the Erie Railway we had a passing glimpse of "Mighty Niagara," after crossing the lines and entering Pennsylvania, we proceeded by the fertile valleys of the Susquehanna and Lehigh Rivers, not forgetting the fur historic Wyoming, the home of the mythical Gertrude, and the culminating point of the picturesque in that district of the "key-stone" State. In fancy, we could see, as in Campbell's noted vision, "Lake after lake interminably gleam." The name sylvan, so appropriately chosen by the original proprietor, harmonizes beautifully with the magnificent forests and diversified woods of the whole district, while, underlying this landscape of pictorial wealth, are treasures of iron, marble and inexhaustible coal-fields, all graciously provided for the service and comfort of man. From the combination of nature's beauty and fertility, this part of Pennsylvania has been not unjustly termed, "The Switzerland of America," it has strong claims to the wonder and admiration of every appreciative traveller, especially if, with a philanthropic eye, he can march its moral aspects, suggestive of sobriety, order, industry and improvement.

Our journey terminated on Wednesday afternoon. We were all soon accommodated either in private homes or comfortable hotels in the "Quaker City." Philadelphia is the metropolis, but not the legislative capital of the State. It lies between the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers, its extent is in length not in breadth (being only two English miles).

It is a beautiful city, and like the State, bears the impress of its origin, having external features of uniformity, symmetry, neatness, repose and benevolence. Its sylvan relationship may be traced in the nomenclature of the streets, an alphabetical list of the names of trees given to those running east and west, the intersecting ones, north and south are called numerically, thus making it easy for a stranger to find his way. It is remarkable that the celebrated Dr. Prideaux in his well known work, "The connection of the Old and New Testament," gives a plan of ancient Babylon, and says of it, "Much according to this model hath William Penn, the Quaker, laid the ground for his city of Philadelphia in Pennsylvania; and were it all built according to that design it would be the fairest and best city in all America, and not much behind any other in the whole world." The city is thus spoken of by its founder, in his farewell address: "And thou, Philadelphia, the virgin settlement of this province, named before thou wert born, what love, what care, what service has there been to bring thee forth and preserve thee? My love to thee has been great, and the remembrance of thee affects mine heart and mine eyes. The God of eternal strength keep and preserve thee to His glory and thy peace!"

The grand reception preparatory to the direct business of the Council, took place on the evening of Wednesday, Sept. 22nd, in the Academy of Fine Arts, a splendid building, whose spacious saloons were ornamented with master pieces of painting, and valuable statuary; contributions from gardens and green-houses, exotics and foliage plants, elegantly arranged, whose delightful perfume made fragrant every corner. The lecture room and audience-chambers were reserved for the presentation of the delegates who were led in by two representative citizens, George H. Stuart and John Wanamaker, the foreign delegates took the lead. 2,500 invitations had been issued. Governor Hoyt of Pennsylvania, presided, along with Mayor Stokely. Their addresses of welcome were most stirring

and cordial. One of these gentlemen said: "All classes, artisans, merchants, professional men, our wives and our daughters, with well-wishers from other churches have met here to welcome our friends on this memorable occasion. If you were to take Presbyterianism from Philadelphia, the commonwealth would lose one-third of its population and of its wealth." The Rev. Dr. Cairns of Edinburgh, responded, taking as his key-note the translated motto on the invitation card, "Let brotherly love continue." He said that when visiting the United States, nothing had surprised him more than the magnitude of their mission work. General McLellan, a Presbyterian elder, said a few words, and the last speaker was Narayan Sheshadri, than whom none was more cordially received. He appeared as the delegate from many Presbyteries. He is a fine specimen of the triumph of truth over idolatry.

The vast assemblage had been so closely packed together, it now sought expansion and liberty of speech, so pressing outward the company spread over the whole building, and spent the remainder of the evening in very pleasant intercourse. Such wonderful interchanges, recognitions of old friends, introductions to new, warm greetings, kind inquiries, hand to hand, heart to heart, truly it was a pleasant atmosphere, and the Academy of Fine Arts presented a scene of animation, cordiality, union and love, not soon to be forgotten. We may take note of a very interesting historical coincidence in reference to our great Presbyterian gathering. In 1680 William Penn received from Charles II. then upon the throne, the charter of proprietorship of the territories west of the Delaware, now constituting the State of Pennsylvania, most appropriately then, has Philadelphia, the capital which was soon after founded, been selected as the place of meeting for the great Presbyterian Council of 1880.

Thursday, September 23rd.—The Academy of Music was the scene of the first day's immense gathering. The delegates met by appointment, and walked in procession to the place of meeting. After they were seated, the public were admitted, but many had secured seats long before. You must now try to carry your eye over an audience of at least 6,000. The building being circular, all were within sight and hearing. I have seen nothing like it since the glorious Disruption days in Edinburgh in 1843. Then we were ready "to hang our harps on the willows, when we remembered Zion," but the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. That was an *exodus*, this is the *ingathering*, and a new song has been put into our mouth.

The whole scene on Thursday spoke of the vastness of the world's redemption. If such a gathering represented one section of the Christian Church, what a great ecclesiastical family! What a large brotherhood! What a beautiful picture, this communion of saints! What a fragrance and power from united prayer! How delightful such a cultivation of Christian friendship, bringing congenial minds together, deepening their mutual interests, and foreshadowing the General Assembly and Church of the first-born, who shall meet in the heavenly Jerusalem, on Mount Zion, and in the city of the living God.

The opening sermon by the Rev. Dr. Paxton, has been justly eulogized as not only suitable to the occasion, but as eloquent and powerful. The "old hundredth" Psalm was sung not at the beginning, but at the end of the service. If not artistically it was heartily joined in by the immense audience. What a grand missionary psalm it is? "All people." What people? Not the heathen unsaved, but the redeemed family of God. A great congregation uttering praise and blessing and thanksgiving led by the Messiah Himself, the chief musician.

The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of Philadelphia held a special meeting on Tuesday, 28th September, in the lecture-room of one of the churches. The hall was filled to overflowing, and there were representations of missionary organizations from every section of the United States, Canada, England, Ireland, Scotland, Africa and India. In the absence of the President, Mrs. Dr. Wm. Shenck, Mrs. R. Allen took the chair. The morning session was commenced with prayer by Mrs. Cunningham of Wheeling, West Virginia. Mrs. Allen delivered the address of welcome, and alluded to the first inception of the missionary work in woman's mind forty years ago in Scotland. The Americans trace it further back to a juvenile society in Philadelphia fifty years ago, and before that

period it had its inception in the prayers of our fathers and grandfathers. After singing the coronation hymn, the Rev. H. L. Mackenzie (in the room of his wife, missionary of the Presbyterian Church of England at Swatow, China, gave an interesting account of the condition of the missionary work at his station, and also brought greetings to the meeting from the English Presbyterian Society.

Mrs. Murray Mitchell of Edinburgh, Scotland, made an eloquent and touching appeal for the women of India, among whom she had lived many years, and to whom she is now returning for a visit. She said: "There are 120,000,000 women in India, calling out, 'Shew us the Father.' There are now in India one hundred schools, containing 4,000 pupils, and the noble work is advancing rapidly, although much remains to be done." Mrs. Cunningham of Wheeling, Va., gave an exhaustive resume of the work of the six great Presbyterian societies in the United States, and shewed that during the past ten years \$962,517.28 had been expended on foreign missions.

Mrs. Mackintosh of Belfast, spoke of the work now being done by the Presbyterian Missionary Society in Ireland, though young, it was promising. Mrs. Mackintosh added: "If Philadelphia be called the city of brotherly love, we have also found it to be a city of sisterly grace."

A report was read from the Scottish Society for the Christianization of Jewish women. The most conspicuous feature of this report was the statement that the Society had established a station in Calcutta at the request of the Jewish residents.

Mrs. Perkins read reports from the Church of Scotland and United Presbyterian Societies in Edinburgh. After prayer and singing, the forenoon session closed. There was an interval of two hours for lunch and social intercourse. The afternoon meeting was held in the church, and was attended by seven hundred ladies. It commenced at half past three, Mrs. Dr. Wilson leading in prayer. Miss Pringle from Edinburgh, read a paper on the Waldenses, and made an earnest appeal on behalf of the pastors of the valleys, who are very poorly paid.

The report of our Canadian Missionary Society was then called for, and as Mrs. McMurrich and I were the only representatives, our esteemed President, Mrs. McLaren, requested me to say a few words; so, although, I had not the official badge of a delegate, I was not without my credentials. As you may suppose, I felt very nervous at the sound of my own voice in the presence of such an audience; however, I tried to convey to them the Christian greetings of our Society in Canada, and coming as I did from the land of Knox, of Chalmers, of Guthrie, and of Duff, I would be unworthy of my name, my ancestry, my birth, and my education, if I could not say a word on behalf of the missionary cause. I prefaced what I had to read by saying, that in these days of divergence from the good old way, it had refreshed my heart to come to this city and find it such a stronghold of Presbyterianism, and to meet with so many noble standard bearers for the truth. The scene of last Thursday was glorious and memorable! Your magnificent hall in the Academy of Music was never before filled with such an audience of zeal-hearted Presbyterians. Its walls never echoed such strains as those of our Church's psalmody. The sight of such a gathering on such an occasion, was an ample compensation to the friends who had encountered perils by sea and by land, in order to join the goodly company. Yes, an assembly so vast could only be brought and bound together by a chord of sympathy, the sole result of the touch of love and the power of God's Spirit. Surely it was worth coming for, nay more, it was worth living for.

The year 1880 will be one of great note in our ecclesiastical history. The centenary of Chalmers, and the jubilee of missions have lately been celebrated in my fatherland; how wisely and suitably then was it arranged that the second great Council of the Presbyterian Church should be held in Philadelphia, the "city of brotherly love." This Council presents to the world not only a picture of Christian unity, but we trust, it will give a mighty impulse to our mission work, a creative or reviving source of influence and extension. Dear friends, this gathering to-day as well as those of the past week, have a voice although a word had not been spoken. They tell us how boundless the work of converting heathendom whether at home or abroad, a work which shall never be finished till the Messiah, the bridegroom shall come to claim his bride, and