

Canada's National Missionary Congress

SOME NOTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS

The greatest and most significant gathering of a religious character ever held in British North America concluded its sessions in Massey Hall, Toronto, on Sunday night. From whatever point we view it, that of numbers or enthusiasm or high purpose or breadth of outlook or earnest and intelligent discussion, the Canadian National Missionary Congress was the most unique and compelling thing of its kind, we believe, ever seen in Northern North America.

And in some of its features at least it was unique among great world gatherings. It is true that we could not call it a National Congress in the fullest sense of the word, in that it did not include the great Roman Catholic Church, but for all the Protestant Churches of any country to unite in a great representative gathering for the discussion of missionary problems and opportunities and the assuming of missionary obligations and duties is something new under the sun.

Time will most surely tell what the full results of this great gathering will be, but it would take no prophet to predict that they would be of the most far-reaching and enduring kind. The missionary obligation is so clear and insistent, the missionary opportunity is so large and inviting, that an honest and earnest Christian man cannot face them squarely and not be won to the cause of world-evangelization.

In reality, the Congress began on Wednesday morning in the school-house of St. James' Cathedral with a prayer-meeting conducted by Mr. S. J. Moore. It was significant to note that in almost every prayer that was voiced in that large gathering there was a pleading for a larger vision touching this great work of Christian missions.

The opening meeting in Massey Hall was on Wednesday afternoon, announced to be specially for clergymen and students, though probably the audience differed very little from that which assembled at the other sessions. The theme of discussion was "The Relation of the Ministry to a Missionary Church." The opening devotional exercises were of an exceedingly hearty and inspiring kind, and there was a very manifest spirit of expectancy and receptiveness when Mr. Robert E. Speer, of New York, was announced to speak upon "The Great Commission."

Mr. Speer, always so earnest, straightforward, convincing, was in splendid form, and thrilled his audience with his appeal for loyalty to the spirit and method of Jesus Christ. That last great command of Christ's to go into all the world and preach the Gospel was not, he said, the foundation of the missionary spirit. If that command had never been uttered the missionary obligation would not have been affected, because it rested upon the character of God, the universality of the Gospel, and the unity and need of humanity.

The commission defined the message of the church as action and power, not reflection or defensive apologetics. These latter had their place, but when the Lord came to deal with the real message of the church, He placed the emphasis on the former. The Gospel was to be safeguarded, not by walling it about, but by aggressive action. The spectacle of a religion conquering the world would be the best argument that that religion was divine.

The church was bothered with heresy because it had lost its momentum. One never saw heresy bothering a church that had speed enough. Then the commission gave the church a

great living cause. The perpetuation of an institution or the propagation of a body of doctrine was no adequate cause. The true cause was the propagation of a great and living principle, an end, a something to be achieved. The commission laid emphasis upon the personal element and demanded personal loyalty. It made the church's purpose to be the conquest of human personality for its Founder and the establishment of His personal rule and control over the whole life of humanity.

Principal Gandier, of Knox College, was the next speaker, strong, thoughtful, educative, on the theme, "The Minister, the Leader of His People." He pointed out that though the minister should himself do the work of an evangelist, his work was not ended until he had made his people to feel their responsibility to win souls. His power to win souls was not limited to personal contact, but his influence could be projected into any land where it might be most needed.

Mr. J. Campbell White, General Secretary of the Laymen's Missionary Movement of New York, gave the third address. His subject was "Reflex Influence of Missions," but in his intensity of earnestness he was not always able to keep very closely to his theme.

Wednesday Evening Meeting.

In opening the evening meeting of the Congress, the president, Mr. N. W. Rowell, K.C., took occasion to say that it was the largest and most representative gathering of Christian men ever assembled in Canada. It represented the growing spirit of Christian unity and co-operation among the churches of the Dominion, and the awakened interest of Christian men in the real work of the church. He read letters of regret at being unable to be present from the Hon. James Bryce, British Ambassador at Washington; His Excellency the Governor-General, and Sir Robert Hart, late of China.

The Hon. J. M. Gibson, Lieut.-Governor of Ontario, spoke a few words of welcome to the members of the congress, in which he revealed the fact that he was himself in close touch with the work of the Laymen's Missionary Movement.

A very interesting incident of the meeting was the introduction of Sir Andrew Fraser, who stated that he appeared before them as a representative, first of the Laymen's Movement in Scotland, and then of the native Presbyterian Church of India. He was still Moderator of that church, and still continued to have the keenest of interest in the religious conditions and needs of the people of India.

Mr. Rowell spoke on "Canada's Opportunity at Home and Abroad." In clearness of thought and effectiveness of deliverance, his address was quite the equal of anything during the Congress. He said:

That we may better appreciate the greatness and significance of this opportunity let us briefly recall to our minds the extent and general characteristics of our country and the number and character of our immigrants and settlers.

Canada, with a present population of not more than 7,000,000, is larger than the United States, including Alaska, the Philippines, Porto Rico, and its other possessions, with their combined population of over 100,000,000. Canada has al-

Continued on page 12.

GOD IN THE HANDS OF MAN.

By A. W. Lewis, B.D.

Theology is continually telling us that we are in the hands of God. The supreme joy of religion is that we are in the hands of God. This is a natural thought. It is a rational truth. It is the only rational idea of God the Creator and father. No esteemed father on earth will cast off his children. We can not imagine that the good God and all-loving Heavenly Father would let His helpless children suffer in the power of a terrible, law-abiding machine, of irresistible fate. God keeps us in His hand, to father us into a godlike character. This is Christianity. But it startles us to be told that God puts Himself in the hands of man. He said to Moses: "Let me alone, that I may consume this stiffnecked people;" and to Jacob He said, after wrestling with him all night, "Let me go, for the day breaketh."

In the case of Jacob we are told "a man wrestled with him." We need not delay long to enquire who this man was. It may have been an angel. It may have been the "angel of the Covenant." It does not make any difference who it was, except this, that he represented God to Jacob. The same is true of the Bible, and of the Church. Nature is the work of God. The Bible is His Word. The Church is His organization, a world-wide brotherhood. In all these He puts Himself in the hands of man. He permits man to do his work. He calls man to be His representatives on earth. As the angel put himself in the hands of Jacob, so God to-day puts Himself in the hands of man. Jacob accepted this truth. It was too plain for him to evade. "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

You have seen a father and his little child. Who has not watched them with deepest interest? Sometimes they play together; and the father puts himself in the hands of his boy, though a hundred times the stronger. He condescends to the power and the wisdom and even the childishness of his little one, that they may be companions. More than this. The time has come to end this playfulness; and the father must go to weightier things, and the boy to more profitable things. The father is still in the hands of his child. He clings to him. His love will not let go. Perhaps he has some petition. Perhaps it is merely a yearning for continued fellowship. The father says: "Let me go. I cannot stay longer." So God said to Jacob: "Let me go; for the day breaketh." And the day was to bring to Jacob new duties and new joys. "Let Me go."

The Incarnation is a marvellous expression of this truth: God in the hands of man! In olden times He gave hints of His condescension. In Jesus Christ He so perfected the thought that all the world wonders. Some cannot believe that it is true. It seems too good to be true. It is too wonderful for us to understand. And God so condescended to man's lack of faith that He sent angels to announce it beforehand. The choirs of heaven heralded its accomplishment. At least three times the Father spoke to men: "This is My Son." No one else was ever like Him—the only begotten! God in the hands of man! The Word made flesh! A lenten thought! On God's side of the truth there is nothing else so expressive of His love for humanity, for even the sinful sons of men. He stooped to share the struggles and the ills that flesh is heir to. His yearning love led Him to put himself in the power of human nature and became subject to human authority. He came not to judge but to save. And He could bless His children most by making common cause with them, and by putting Himself into the hands of men. No heathen religion