

moh or violence. They are preparing the way, evidently for a great change in regard to slavery, and for the prevalence of pure religion.

The Secretary gave the main points of interest connected with the labors and perils of the missionaries of the association of Kansas, and thrilling facts taken from letters of the missionaries. The wife of one of them (Rev. H. Byrd) had given an account of his been carried away from his family at night by five armed men; kept in the camp of the Border Ruffians for two weeks. He has since been liberated, after great danger. The letter from Rev. S. L. Adair, one of the missionaries at Osawatimie, giving a statement of the late battle of Osawatimie, the burning of the place, the murder of defenceless men, and the escape of the missionaries and preservation of their families, produced a profound sensation in the meeting.

The Report on Home Missions was concluded by a review of various points of moment in the Home Missionary enterprise, and by recommendations of measures to be pursued more fully to develop the principles and aims of the Association in this land, promote the Christian instruction of the people, and the removal of slavery and other evils, which in the Church and the State, prevent the salvation of the land and the free, and will bring upon us the direst judgments of the Almighty, if not repented of and removed.

General Religious Intelligence.

IRISH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH—REPORT ON THE STATE OF RELIGION.

The Committee on the State of Religion have to report that this vital subject is, from year to year, occupying a larger place in the deliberations of our Presbyteries and Synods. It seems to be more and more deeply felt over the Church, that all our ecclesiastical councils and modes of procedure are to be made subordinate and subservient to the extension of the kingdom of God, and that their value is proportioned to the degree in which they are found conducive to that great end. This fact is, perhaps, the most important which the Committee have to report in reviewing the history of the past year.

GENERAL SUMMARY.

In all quarters from which intelligence has reached the Committee, it is stated that attendance on the preaching of the Gospel, and in some cases the membership of the Church also, is increased; that Sabbath-school instruction is brought within the reach of all the children of our people; that congregational libraries are generally established; and that a growing liberality is evinced in contributing to the Missionary cause. By means of social meetings numerously held over the Province, opportunities have been afforded and embraced of urging on the attention of large assemblages of persons many topics calculated at once to instruct and stimulate the mind, and to improve the heart, and an advancing spirit of Scriptural intelligence and inquiry has thus been fostered amongst the younger members of the community. Our people are thus rapidly growing in their general acquaintance with the aspect of the kingdom of Christ at home and abroad, and are evincing a deeper sympathy with all that concerns its condition and prosperity.

OPEN-AIR PREACHING.

One of the most encouraging symptoms of progress, is the practice of open-air preaching, which is every successive year extending over the territory of the Church. During the past year, no fewer than sixty of our ministers engaged in this arduous but honourable work, holding 368 services, which were attended by upwards of 73,000 hearers. At each of these

meetings the preacher's aim was, directly and pointedly, to address the conscience as well as the understanding of his auditors, and affectionately and urgently to exhort them to flee to Christ for pardon and salvation. Many thousands of tracts, liberally furnished by Mr. Drummond of Stirling, and by Mr. Millar of Lurgan, have been distributed on these occasions, and have been readily and gratefully received. It is gratifying to be able to state that many ministers, both in England and Scotland, are now pursuing this mode of seeking to reach the out-field, and hitherto neglected population, and that they have been much encouraged in this work by the reports which have reached them of the efforts of ministers of the Irish Presbyterian Church. The Committee earnestly hope that the example of our ministers will be imitated by many of the private members of the Church, and that lay agencies shall be formed of voluntary labourers, who shall devote some portion of their time to seek, by domestic visitation, conducted in the spirit of Christian sympathy and kindness, to penetrate the unevangelised masses of the community with the word of eternal life.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE AND FAITH.

But, whilst we thankfully acknowledge and record the many cheering manifestations of Christian zeal and activity which are witnessed amongst us, we must also admit that there is abundant ground for humiliation and confession of sin before God. The way of salvation is clearly announced from our pulpits—but our Presbyteries in their reports express their sorrow and disappointment that the word of God is not accompanied by greater power in arresting the mind and hearts of man. They are not satisfied with the spiritual state of our congregation—they long to witness a more general awakening of our people to the claims of eternity—deeper convictions of sin, a more extensive outpouring of the Holy Spirit corresponding to the work of grace, manifested on the day of Pentecost, or even in our own times, in Scotland and in America. It is surely a cheering omen of good, that so many of our ministers are looking for the indication of the Divine presence and power to accompany and attest the preaching of the Gospel. May we not humbly hope that He who has awakened this desire, is preparing us for the reception of the blessing so earnestly sought? The redemption of Christ is complete. He is exalted to be a prince and a Saviour. He hath now obtained the promise of the Father. He is only waiting for the prayer of faith, that He may bestow the Spirit of all grace in the fulness and extent of His beneficent operations. Apart from our own unbelief and spiritual apathy, there seems to be no reason why we may not witness conversions as prompt and as decided as those which marked the days of the primitive Church.

SABBATH SCHOOLS.

When it is considered how large an amount of agency has been employed for so many years in connection with the Sabbath-School, it is not unreasonable to expect a much larger harvest of spiritual fruit than has actually been obtained from this important institution. Vital religion has not increased in our Protestant Church in proportion to the extent of means employed to instruct the young of our people in the knowledge of the Word of God. The Committee recommend this subject to the serious attention of their brethren, and suggest to them to consider, whether this proportional want of success may not partly be traced to the frequent employment of inadequate teachers; whether some may not have been called to teach in the Sabbath-school, who have never evinced the power of religion in their own character; and others, who though well instructed and well disposed, have no gift of teaching, and are thus incapable of awakening the

interest, or even of engaging the attention of their pupils.

FAMILY WORSHIP.

Complaints are made in the reports sent forward to the Committee, that family worship is by many of our people wholly neglected, and by many imperfectly observed. There is too much reason to fear, that in those houses in which the family altar is not frequented, there is no religious training or teaching of the young, and that when parents who understand their duty to their children do not perform it, their lack of service is not supplied by the Sabbath-School teacher, nor even by the minister. The pastor is to urge parents to educate their children for God and for eternity, reminding them of the precious promises which are given to encourage them to this great work. If the Divine command be not obeyed, if the Divine promise be not believed by the fathers and mothers professing to be the servants of Christ, the conversion of their children is rarely witnessed, even under the most diligent and faithful ministry. The Committee are deeply impressed by the pre-eminent importance of this subject. They invite to it the special attention of their brethren. The religion of the Church is the religion of the families of which the Church is composed. If the Church is to be revived, or if society is to be healed of its moral disorders, we must commence with the family, which is the germ both of the Church and State. In connection with this subject, the Committee cannot but regard it as an interesting and encouraging fact, that a work on "Family Piety," admirably fitted for circulation among our people, has been written by one of our own ministers.

SUGGESTIONS.

The suggestions thrown out in the Synodical reports for the advancement of vital religion throughout the Church, are such as the following:—

"That ministers in their public address, and in their private intercourse with their people, should aim more directly and more habitually at the conversion of souls.

"That they preach more frequently on the work of the Holy Spirit.

"That they give their prompt, earnest, and prayerful attention to the consideration of the most effective means under God of resisting the two prominent evils of the present day, Sabbath Desecration and Intemperance.

"That the discipline of Christ's house be more faithfully exercised, and that communicants, on their first admission into the Church, be urged to devote themselves to some specific field of labour in the service of Christ.

"That efforts be made to enlist the eldership in more systematic and vigorous co-operation with the pastor in the spiritual superintendence of the Church, and in calling out the gifts of its members.

"And that there be a more frequent interchange of pulpits, and that the spirit of Christian fellowship be more fully cultivated and maintained amongst ministers and people."

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, the Committee, after perusing the several reports submitted to them, feel that they have reason to call on the Assembly to cherish the spirit and the language of thankfulness and hope. For although there be still remaining with us much for which we have reasons to be deeply humbled before God, yet may it be safely affirmed, to the praise of His marvellous grace, that there is amongst us a deepening sense of ministerial responsibility—that there is a healthful spirit of intelligent Christian activity on behalf of evangelical truth—that there is an enlarged measure of brotherly love amongst the office-bearers and members of the Presbyterian Church—and that there is a growing desire and effort to advance the kingdom of God in our own and foreign lands.