

The Presbyterian Review.

Vol. XI.—No. 5.

TORONTO, AUGUST 9, 1894.

\$1.50 per Annum

The Believers Meeting, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

For the Review.

THESE meetings held yearly for Bible study, by those holding the premillarian view of Christ's second coming, continue during seven days. Two days pleasantly spent at the meetings by one not holding this distinctive doctrine provoked these musings.

(1) That this assembly of Christians have a tenacious grasp upon the fundamental truths of Scripture. They stand evidently undismayed in the face of the most skillful assaults upon the foundations of the faith, by the negative criticism and rationalism of the day. They refuse the diluted and adulterated doctrines so palatable to many who affect scholarship, and partake only of those life giving truths which the sober sanctified scholars of the ages has ever found in scripture. To the divinity of Christ they lay as firm a hold as Athanasius ever did. In the matter of man's moral and spiritual needs they are as true to the facts of experience and the teaching of Scripture as Augustine was. On the atonement they are as sound as Auselem. That man receives the benefits of Christ's atonement on condition of faith, they teach as freely as Luther did. The need of the reformation of the individual they emphasize as much as Wesley and Jonathan Edwards did. To minds and hearts wearied with the unrest that uncertainty begets, and unsatisfied with the food that the lovers of negation offer, such definite unwavering re-statements of well tried truth are like a rock in a weary land, and manna in the hungry desert. From much of the religious literature of the day so hesitating in its conclusions, and even from some of its preaching with its "ifs" and "buts" one turns with relief to meetings such as these, where men with fearless dogmatism declare that they are not simply seeking for, but have found the truth under the stimulus of a love for originality, or a less worthy love for the novel, a few may be disposed to resent such dogmatism and to turn with hasty steps to the dreary wastes of uncertainty and doubt. The large majority however, longing for a sure resting place will turn with unfeigned pleasure to the teachers and leaders who know what they believe, and declare to others with unwavering confidence what they know.

(2) That these Christians are thoroughly in earnest, a strong faith, a tenacious grasp of a mighty truth naturally results in an earnest spirit. As well expect a piece of machinery to remain motionless belted to a mighty shaft as to expect that one can cling to the mighty truths of Christianity without being awakened to a measure of earnestness. So in these meetings corresponding to a grasp of the truths so dear to the thoroughly Christian heart, there was a marked earnestness that went far to still any lingering prejudice that the thought of a distinctive opinion is unfortunately so apt to arouse. Men admire earnestness. One is pleased to meet persons earnest about something. The listless few who have no interest in anything, who have ap-

parently no object in life, we pity if we do not disdain. But the earnest about something are always interesting, always refreshing, and such were seen in these gatherings. If only a similar spirit could be inspired into every life in the world it land be an untold blessing. It would beautify lives that now through stagnation are hastening to moral and spiritual decay. It would wake happy lives that now through ennui are restless and unhappy.

(3) That these who are the head and heart of these meetings are saturated with the thought that it is the work of the church to save believers over the world and out of the world. They ring the changes upon the phase the present evil world with the implication that the chief work of believers is to save themselves from it. This thought is certainly scriptural. But alongside of it should be placed the parallel truth that the great work of the church is to save the world, to make universal the sway of Christ's kingdom, to bring as much as possible of heaven into earth. This truth is taught in such passages as "ye are the salt of the earth," "ye are the light of the world," as well as in the parable of the leaven, and those passages that predict Christ's universal sway over the world. It is certainly a less burdensome thought to think that the work of the church is to save itself, leaving the world to deteriorate into universal corruption. It assuredly weighs down the heart to look upon and to read about the world with all its sin and consequent misery, and to believe that the work of the church is to cleanse away this sin, and relieve this misery. It would be an immense relief could we believe that the lesser end was the one which the church was to keep in view. But then it is not by unburdened men that the world is delivered. It is rather by those who feel the burden of human sin, who pass through their Gethsemane, where in a measure conscious of the unspeakable needs of the perishing, they reconsecrate themselves to the work of human salvation. Separate from the world, different from the world, they thus become more fitting instruments for its salvation, they become the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the leaven that will ultimately leaven the whole lump. Far be it from any to say that these who set the warriors task before them are less active than others in the salvation of the lost. At the same time it is not to be forgotten that one of the conditions of success is a true ideal of the work to be done and there can be no doubt that the true ideal for the church in this matter is the universal sway of Christ's kingdom.

(4) That happiness glides trippingly along in the train of Christianity. These people assembled from the length and breadth of our extensive Dominion, and from the equally extensive Republic that guards its southern limits, were not in pursuit of happiness, yet they were evidently possessed of happiness. They were not pleasure seekers but they enjoyed real pleasure. Thus as they met in their airy pavillion, or sauntered on the lawn fanned by Ontario's cooling breezes they were an object lesson to the world's pleasure seekers, showing that the unfailing source of happiness is the harmony with God and his universe which Christianity secures, and to all social and moral reformers that for the discontent, unrest and misery of the world, christianity is the all sufficient remedy to bring their fellows to a life such as these evidently lived, is the aim of every man in whose heart glows love to man. And their life is avowedly the product of christianity.