

General Assembly gave in their reports which were received and their diligence and faithfulness approved. On revising the list it was found that there were no vacancies in the bounds, and that the mission stations were duly provided for, either by pastoral oversight or student supply for the summer. The Convener of the Finance Committee stated that he was not prepared to report, not having been furnished with the requisite information. Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Hodgskin were appointed auditors of the Treasurer's books. A committee on evangelistic services in the bounds was chosen, consisting of Mr. Mullan, Convener, Mr. Edmison, Dr. MacKay, Mr. Strachan and Mr. Blair, ministers; with Messrs. Hodgskin, A. D. Fordyce, and Archibald Campbell, ruling elders. Mr. Mullan reported the formation of a congregation in West Garafraxa, in connection with the Second Church, Garafraxa, and permission was given to take the usual steps towards the election and ordination of elders. Similar permission was given in the case of Elmia, at which a congregation had been re-organized by Mr. Hamilton, who had been holding services there for some time. Dr. Wardrope gave notice that he would move, at next meeting, that the Presbytery make it a rule to appoint all its commissioners to the General Assembly henceforth by rotation. It was resolved that, as special Sabbaths are annually appointed by the Assembly for taking up collections for the Schemes of the Church in congregations in which there are no missionary associations, the Presbytery institute inquiry at the first meeting after every one of these Sabbaths as to the attention which has been given to the instruction of the Assembly in order that, in cases in which they had been neglected congregations may be visited or otherwise dealt with, as the Presbytery may deem best. It was an instruction to the Clerk to make out and announce to each congregation the sum expected from it for the Synod and Assembly Expense Funds at as early a date as he can after being supplied with the necessary data on which to base his calculations. On motion of Mr. J. K. Smith, it was agreed to recommend the formation of a Women's Association in each congregation for the purpose of aiding the Missionary and other Schemes of the Church. Mr. Cameron, of Acton, tendered his resignation of his pastoral charge, when a committee was chosen to confer with him and all parties interested and report at next regular meeting. A request was presented from East Puslinch for a copy of the minutes containing the final action of the Presbytery regarding the Church property in Puslinch. This the Clerk was authorized to furnish. Next meeting was fixed to be held in Chalmers Church, Guelph, on the third Tuesday of September, at ten o'clock in the forenoon. —ROBT. TORRANCE, *Pres. Clerk*.

PRESBYTERY OF SARNIA.—This Presbytery met, pursuant to adjournment, at Petrolia, on Tuesday, the 14th inst., at 10 a.m., and was constituted. Sealerunt—Rev. James McCutcheon, Moderator, in the chair; Mr. George Cuthbertson, Clerk; Messrs. John Thompson, J. A. McDonald, John McKibbie, Hugh Cameron, John Anderson, James C. Tibb, J. R. Johnston and George McLennan, ministers; and Messrs. Donald McMillan, Robert Anderson, John Crawford, P. Barclay and William Bryce, elders. The Clerk read a minute authorizing the meeting. Mr. McDonald laid on the table a call from Oil Springs and Oil City to Mr. D. C. Johnston, a probationer of the Church. Mr. McDonald intimated that he had, according to instructions of Presbytery, moderated in this call on the 13th inst. It was signed by forty members and fifty-five adherents, promising an annual stipend of \$450, Oil Springs to pay \$350 and Oil City \$100; the call was hearty and unanimous. Messrs. Miller and Big, commissioners from the congregation, were heard. On motion of Mr. Thompson, it was agreed to approve of the Moderator's conduct, sustain the call as a regular Gospel call, express gratification at the progress of our cause in that locality, and instruct the Clerk to transmit the document to Mr. Johnston for his consideration; and further make application for such share of the Augmentation Fund as may be payable from time to time. The Presbytery then proceeded to enter upon the consideration of the relationship of the two congregations in Petrolia, with a view to harmonize the same. The clerk intimated that he had cited parties. At this stage Mr. McKibbie intimated the resignation of his charge of the congregation of Petrolia, and pressed its immediate acceptance. The Presbytery, after consideration, agreed to waive the usual formality and, being informed that the congregation were prepared to proceed in the matter, and believing that it would tend to facilitate the settlement of difficulties existing in Petrolia, agreed to take up the matter. Parties were called. Compared—Messrs. Gibson, McDonald, Peat, Dawson, Sinclair, McNaughton and H. Ingram, and Mr. McKibbie for himself. Resolutions passed at a congregational meeting expressive of attachment to and unabated confidence in Mr. McKibbie, and also embracing other details, were read. Parties were heard in the above order, Mr. McKibbie pressing his resignation. Questions were put and parties removed. On motion of Mr. Cuthbertson, seconded by Mr. Thompson, it was agreed to accept the resignation, the same to take effect on the 21st inst., and appoint Mr. McDonald to preach and declare the church vacant on the 26th inst., and act as interim Moderator of Session thereafter. Messrs. Thompson and Cuthbertson, ministers, and Mr. Anderson, elder, were appointed to draft a minute in reference to Mr. McKibbie's resignation. It was agreed in terms of a request from the congregation to allow them to borrow on the church property \$350 to enable them to pay in full Mr. McKibbie's salary. It was agreed further to sanction the action of the congregation in directing the managers to allow Mr. McKibbie the free use of the manse for twelve months from date if required. The Clerk was instructed to furnish Mr. McKibbie with a Presbyterial certificate when requested to do so. The Presbytery then proceeded to hear delegates from both congregations, having in view the harmonizing of the two. Messrs. Harley, Draper and Murdock appeared for the Second congregation, and the delegation above named for the Petrolia congregation. These were heard at great length and patiently dealt with by the court. After discussion it was agreed to express the Presbytery's gratification at the spirit and good feeling manifested by the representatives of both congregations with a view to the union of the

same; and the Presbytery for the perfecting of that union recommended both congregations to take steps individually and unitedly for the arrangements of details thereof; and direct said congregations at their meetings to appoint delegates to meet with their Moderators of Sessions and the Clerk of this Presbytery on the first Tuesday of August at eight o'clock p.m., to prepare a report for the Presbytery at its next ordinary meeting. The congregation of Camlachie and McKay were granted leave to borrow \$1,500 on their church property to enable them to erect a new manse at Camlachie, and the Moderator was instructed to sign the necessary papers. —CRO. CUTHBERTSON, *Pres. Clerk*.

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Aug. 9,
1885.

THE PROPHETS OF BAAL.

{ 1 Kings 18
1-29 }

GOLDEN TEXT.—"If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.—1 Kings xviii. 21.

INTRODUCTORY REVIEW.

Let us endeavour to keep fresh in the memory all we know of Elijah, that the grandeur of the man may be appreciated, and that we may magnify the goodness of God who by His wondrous grace endows such sinful creatures as we with such divine superiority. When does Elijah first appear? What message did he convey? Where is the Brook Cherith? How was Elijah fed? Why did he leave that hiding place? Why did he hide? Where did he go after leaving Cherith? How long did he remain in his second hiding place? Who was Obadiah? What had he done that shows his character? What was the character of the meeting between Ahab and Elijah?

We are now entering upon a scene of inimitable grandeur. Let us see in it the final Judgment Day, and imagining ourselves as present, ask the most solemn of all questions: "How will it be with us then?"

EXPLANATORY.

I. A Vast Assembly.—After Elijah had thrown back Ahab's words, charging him with his sin, in departing from the Lord and bringing the punishment that followed upon the nation, he did not wait for an answer or ask for instructions. He takes the reins into his own hands and dictates to the king his will: "Gather to me all Israel."

(1) *Its character.*—All Israel is invited. The Prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty, and the Prophets of the Ashera, four hundred. They were the favourites of Jezebel, fed from her table and, no doubt, bore themselves haughtily amongst the people. The king himself was there and above all and most conspicuous of all was Elijah. A mighty convention assembled at his bidding in order to decide the most momentous question that can be proposed. Conventions are called to discuss and decide upon many important questions, political, scientific, etc.; but what so important as this: "Who is God, Jehovah or Baal?"

(2) *Place.*—They met on the south-east of Carmel, a place admirably fitted for such an assembly. It is said to be a platform 1,000 feet above the surrounding plain; and rising above it is a perpendicular rock 300 feet higher, from which the sea can be seen. Not over one hundred yards below is a spring that is never dry, which may have supplied the water referred to in a subsequent verse.

II. The Proposal.—Elijah is guided by the Spirit of God in making a proposal that otherwise would be a hazardous one. We cannot determine important problems now by such appeals. It can only be done when God gives promise of answering such appeal. The prayer test of Tyndall is an example of a similar test without the Spirit's guidance.

(1) *How long halt ye?*—That is the aim of the miracle—to convince and lead them to come out boldly upon Jehovah's side. Jeroboam's sin was an attempt to combine the worship of Jehovah and idols. His successors went much further in open idolatry. Yet many of the people—probably all—had knowledge of the great acts of Jehovah and felt that He should be worshipped as well as Baal. Now, an other proof is to be added to the many given before, that Jehovah is God and the only God. What greater evidence can men now desire that Jehovah is God? If our minds are made up, let us not divide our allegiance, but be true to our belief.

(2) *Answer by fire,* ver. 24.—The God that will send fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice will be accepted as the true God. That is a way in which God frequently revealed Himself. He revealed Himself to Sodom and Gomorrah, and to the sons of Aaron by a judgment of fire. He revealed Himself to Abraham and Moses at the bush, by fire, as a covenant God. He, at the dedication of the temple, consumed the sacrifice on the altar, etc. In New Testament times the Spirit descended in the form of tongues of fire upon the disciples. God is a consuming fire, either for the destruction of the evil or for the cleansing of the good. Hence, there is a special fitness in this method of deciding the great question.

(3) *Sacrifice.*—They were to make preparations for this divine manifestation by preparing a sacrifice. They were to take each a bullock and cut it in pieces and lay it upon wood, upon an altar, and then turn to their gods in prayer. This was a proposal to which all could agree, because sacrifice was common to the worship of all. It was an evidence that all felt their need of atonement of some kind.

(4) *Precaution.*—There was to be no fire placed under the wood. That was a needed precaution, because it is said that such tricks were sometimes perpetrated. They who are conscious of the weakness of their cause often feel tempted to resort to such frauds. The saddest thing is to see those who teach the religion of Christ practising deceptions in order to advance His cause.

Pious frauds, as they are called, are amongst the recog-

nized agencies of the Catholic Church. How dishonouring to God to believe that He needs to resort to falsehood in order to accomplish His works! He hates all iniquity and cannot honour such as countenance it.

III. Challenge Accepted. The people at once accepted the proposal. We are not told that the priests were willing to accept it, the probability is that many of them were not willing. But they could not escape. The people they had so long deluded were there and they could not withdraw from their pretensions so often publicly made that Baal was the true God.

(1) *Their advantage.* They were very numerous, Elijah was alone. He was not the only believer in Israel; but he was the only one who had the courage of his convictions, and stood up against the prevailing sin. It is much easier to be on the popular side of any movement so long as we are dealing with men. These priests felt that hitherto they were the favourites of Ahab and Jezebel; but now, as they are to deal with God Himself, the advantage disappears. The day is coming when it will be a cause of sorrow and shame if we have followed the multitude to do evil. If we deny Christ now He will deny us then.

It is also an advantage in prayer to have co-operation. Many uniting in prayer are more likely to get an answer than one.

(2) *Put to confusion.*—They accepted the situation, however, reluctantly. They cannot help themselves. But if the confusion at first is great, what must it be as the hours pass from morning till noon and from noon till night, and no answer? If there were any way of escape how gladly would they have seized it? Any technicality that would enable them to retreat would be as welcome as to any criminal trembling in his cell. But the eye of Elijah and the eyes of the people are upon them and they cannot escape.

Oh, how sad the condition of the sinner when the consequences of sin are gathering around him and he seeks help and finds none! "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

(3) *Elijah sarcastic.*—He begins to mock them. He tells them to cry more loudly, for Baal must be asleep, or away from home, or talking to some one, for he is a god. Of course such suggestions are ridiculous when applied to a god, and on that very account must have incensed and excited them the more.

They then cried more loudly, cut themselves so as to make the blood flow, and went through their frantic gesticulations and uttered their meaningless incantations as if they would force Baal to reply and put this insulting Elijah to shame; but all to no purpose. They have to give up, defeated and utterly confounded, before the multitude.

It has been asked how Elijah could trifle in such a solemn crisis. The answer is that he is not trifling, but using the best argument that can be used at certain times. Ridicule is often the strongest argument. It is what God says He will use by-and-by. "I will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh," etc.

It both punishes them and shows that Elijah himself is perfectly easy and satisfied that the Lord will answer him and give the victory. If he had been uneasy and tremulous himself he would not have felt any inclination to be ironical at their expense.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. In the Great Assembly, all, of all shades of belief, shall be there.
2. We cannot serve two masters; we should either take one side or the other.
3. The right is not decided by a show of hands. (Ver. 22.)
4. The best evidence to ourselves that our religion is right is that the Lord answers our prayers by the gift of the Holy Ghost.
5. Not to be heard by our God would be the greatest calamity that could befall us.

POUNDMAKER.

Our "intimate enemy" used to watch silently our great meetings with the Indians, never taking part himself in the speaking. Riding ahead of the waggons and accompanied by a Half-breed, he used to find the way across the trackless prairie by an instinct that seemed extraordinary, for much of the country had not been actually traversed by him before; but he always found us water and camping ground close to the true line of march. Then, when the mess tent had been pitched and darkness and the cold of autumnal night had closed over the vast yellow prairie, he was sometimes summoned to consult on our position, or to tell us in solemn, half-reluctant manner when closely questioned, of some legend of a monster snake or wolf, or deer, or of some famous buffalo hunt. How keenly and yet unexcitedly he walked, stooping over some ill-defined footprints seen one morning on the frosty ground! A guttural sound was all he would vouchsafe, until at last he murmured that there had been thirteen buffaloes passing that spot, and after some hours the small herd was found and some of them killed, Poundmaker showing that he could move fast enough when it suited his dignity, and then relapsing over the dead, shaggy carcasses into his statuesque impenetrability. His band cannot number 200, but he may induce others to join him in that northern region. But as the largest of these scattered camps on this line can only muster about 600 all told an Indian rising may play havoc with the confidence of settlers and prevent colonization in outlying districts, but cannot affect country near railway lands or continue for a long time to give trouble. —*Marquis of Lorne, in the Fortnightly Review.*

THE assertion having been made that lawyers, as a rule, are sceptics in religion, the Philadelphia Times has taken pains to investigate the matter so far as its own city is concerned. Of the 1,500 members of the Philadelphia Bar, nine-tenths are either church members or have well defined church affiliations.