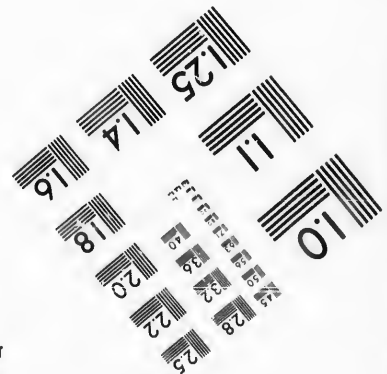
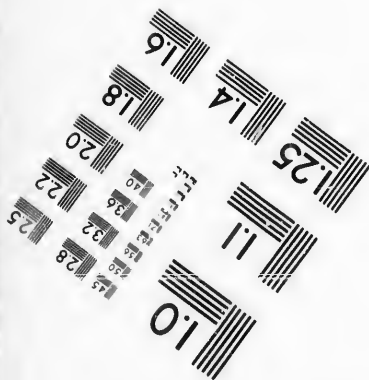
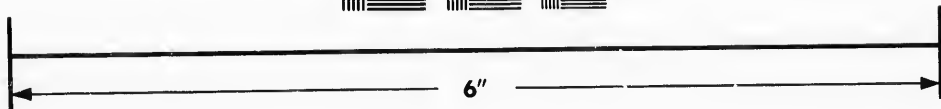
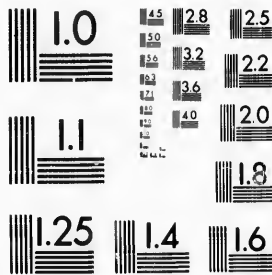


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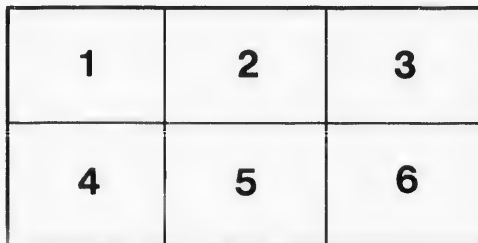
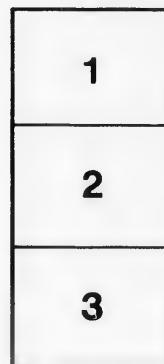
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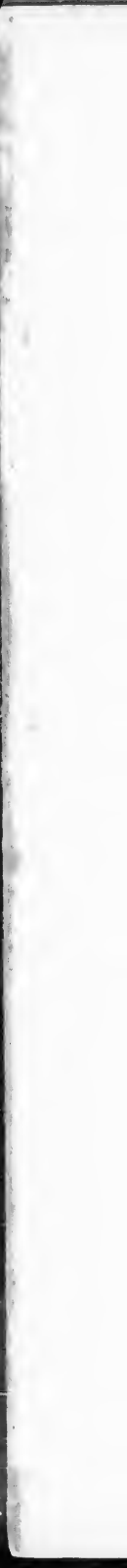
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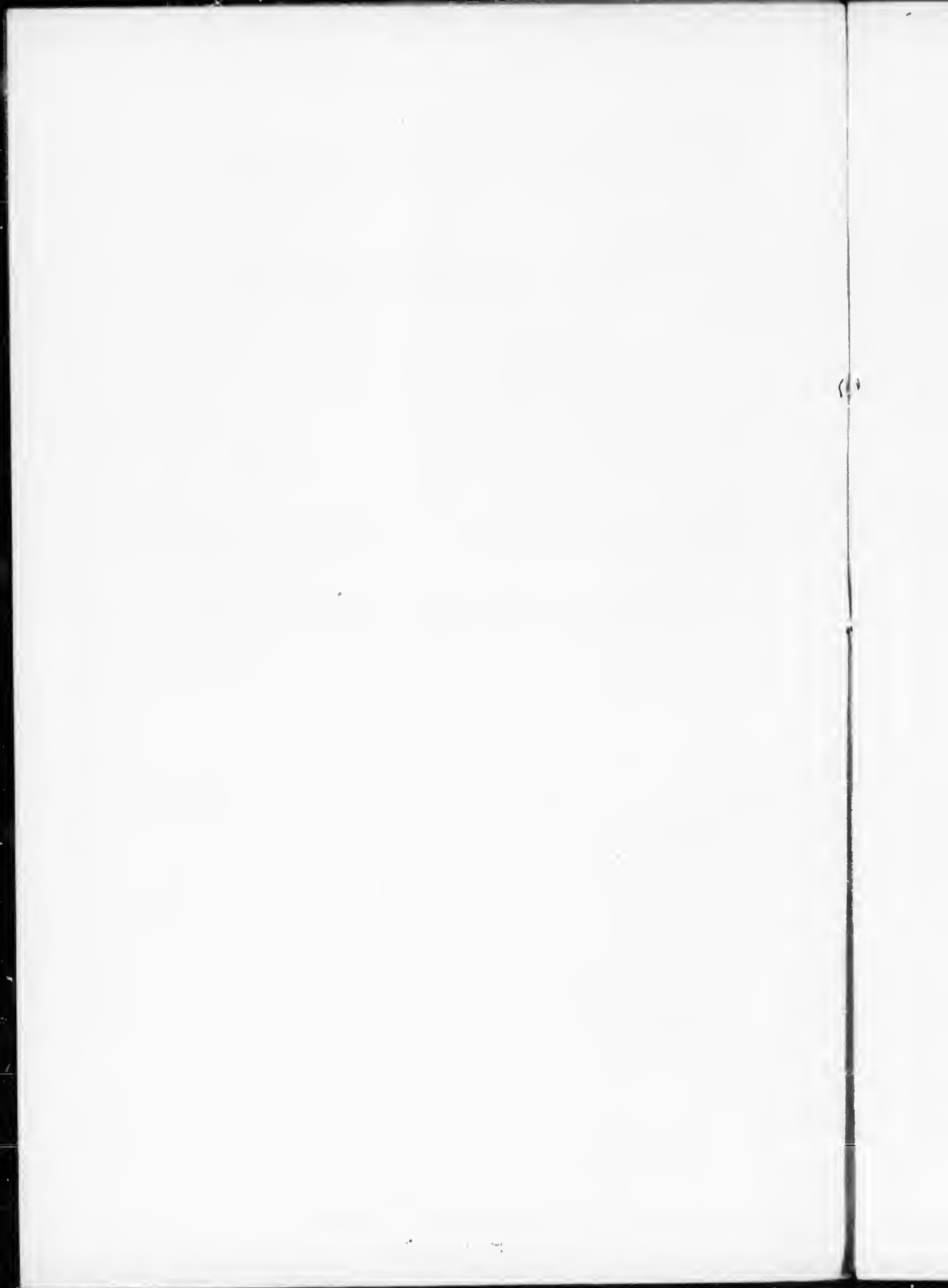
AT AMHERST, N. S., AUG 22, 1885.

BY

REV. A. W. SAWYER, D. D.

HALIFAX.

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1885.





BRETHREN OF THE CONVENTION :—

WE meet here to-day to review the work of the closing year, and consider plans for a new year. This is the fortieth annual meeting of this Convention. The mention of this fact naturally turns our thoughts to the past. The greatness of the changes which have taken place since the organization of this body, it would be difficult for us to conceive. The second annual meeting, which was the first to receive reports on the business of the Convention, was held in Nictaux. On the list of members then present are the names of twenty-four ministers, one-third of whom are still with us. There were at that time about 14,000 church members, nearly one-half of whom were found in a few large churches. The church whose ample hospitality has opened pleasant homes to this large number of delegates was then a small body of sixty-five members, under the pastoral care of Rev. Charles Tupper. The constitution of that day defined the objects of the Convention in general terms, giving special prominence to foreign missions and the support of superannuated ministers. At that second meeting committees on the following subjects were appointed: Amending the constitution, Bible-translation, religious publications, the colporteur enterprise, religious liberty and Catholic aggression, union with Canada, increase and improvement of the ministry, the present state of religion in the Provinces with suggestions for improvement, Sabbath schools, temperance, Union Societies and quarterly meetings. The directors in their report also say that they "consider the interests of education and home missions to be fully as much matters which might easily be connected with this Convention without trespassing hurtfully on any local interests." 'The fathers' certainly took a comprehensive view of their obligations. For the most part the objects in which they were interested and for which they wrought, still continue to call for labor and money. Though the workmen have changed, the work goes on. It would be both interesting and instructive to trace step by step the changes that have taken place in the methods and organizations adopted from time to time by our churches within these forty years for the promotion of christianity at home and in distant lands. But such an examination would be more naturally undertaken on some other occasion. The history of this Convention divides itself into distinct periods. It has seemed to me that we are just at the close of one of these periods, and that it might be well to

review briefly the course of events, as they have been developed during these later years, and note whatever lessons of encouragement or warning they may have for us.

The Convention has from the first given a prominent place to foreign missions. In the beginning it had an independent mission in Burma. Afterwards it became auxiliary to the Missionary Union, and sent to that society considerable sums of money and some valuable laborers. In 1870 a committee was appointed to inquire into the feasibility of establishing an independent mission, and at the same time three missionaries were accepted to labor in Asia when the particular field should be selected. About the same time Woman's Mission Aid Societies began to be formed. These have been multiplied and their forms of operation improved until they have become an important agency in sustaining the missionary service of this Convention. It 1871 it was decided that the time had come for the establishment of an independent mission, and two years later seven individuals were designated as missionaries. After some time spent in comparing different fields, the company of missionaries four<sup>7</sup> themselves in 1875 in the land of the Telegoos with their life work fore them. The necessary beginnings have been made. Three principal stations have been occupied, property of considerable value has been acquired, adequate buildings have been erected, the language has been conquered and churches have been planted. Already the first stage of our mission is passed. Reinforcements are called for. A more liberal supply of means is demanded. New questions must be studied and broader plans adopted. During these years the contributions, though varying somewhat at different times, have been on the whole proportionate to the demands, and indicate a strong attachment of the people to this great cause. If we count Rev. Mr. George and wife, who left for Burma just as the movement for an independent mission was taking shape, within the period of which we are speaking twenty-three missionaries have gone out from the churches represented in this Convention to labor in Asia—a precious offering for the Redeemer's kingdom. We certainly have reason for thankfulness that so much has been done by our churches for foreign missions in so short a time. As we are entering on the second stage, we have to inquire whether the money that will be needed in increasing quantities can be obtained, how rapidly shall the work be pressed on, who are preparing to continue the goodly succession of laborers and say to those asking for additional helpers, 'Here are we, send us'? These questions awaken enough anxiety to hasten our hope.

Our earliest ministers were home missionaries. Our oldest churches were the result of missionary labor. Our people have

always been deeply impressed with regard to the importance of home missions. After the desultory, but nevertheless effective, labors of the first stage in the history of the denomination in these Provinces, there arose a variety of organizations for the propagation of the gospel in destitute places. At the opening of the period which we are reviewing, there were two home-mission boards in Nova Scotia, one in Prince Edward Island and one in New Brunswick. A few brethren became convinced that such narrow and unrelated efforts for the spiritual care of the destitute portions of the country were not the best possible. They desired to see one society directing missionary labor in all parts of the Maritime Provinces. The Nova Scotia Home Mission Union was formed, holding its first meeting in the same year in which our first foreign missionaries were sent forth. This society was accepted by the churches of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Subsequently the constitution of the Convention was changed to include home missions among its objects, and in 1880 the missionary operations of the entire home field came under the control of the Convention. This change has been so recently effected that we are not yet able to compare the conditions of the field under the different systems. But the possibility of more comprehensive plans and of the concentration of labor at important points, the possibility, also, of more permanency in the plans and of the continued devotion of the energy and wisdom of men specially fitted for such service to the maturing and successful accomplishment of far-reaching purposes to care for the neglected thousands in the land and at the same time to build up strong churches in the centres of business and social influence, this possibility should make the next decade conspicuous in comparison with similar periods in the past for the success that should crown the faithful activity of your board in extending and strengthening our denomination in these Provinces.

At a very early day in its history the Convention adopted Acadia College, and became responsible for its support. As the invariable policy has been to make the College as effective as possible for the time being and provide for its enlargement as fast as means could be gathered, its history cannot be divided into very distinctly marked stages of growth; but in the period which is under review some changes have taken place which ought not to be overlooked in estimating what the people have accomplished within that time. In 1872 more than \$20,000 was added to the endowment in connection with the creation of the new scientific professorship. In 1874 enlarged accommodations were provided for the Collegiate Academy at a cost of nearly \$20,000. As a consequence of the discussion

respecting affiliation in 1876, an effort was made still further to increase the endowment, which resulted in the addition of several thousands of dollars. In the midst of this movement the College building, with nearly all its contents, was destroyed by fire. With admirable alacrity the people rallied to the work of rebuilding, and in a little more than one year two buildings were completed and furnished, one for the use of the College, the other for a Ladies' Seminary, at a cost of about \$45,000. Since that time subscriptions have been given which practically cancel the debts on the buildings. Thus within some twelve years the endowment has been raised from about \$40,000 to \$100,000; buildings have been erected at a cost, exclusive of the insurance money, of \$57,000; the College, with an enlarged staff of instructors and an increasing rate of expenditure, has been maintained in the interval; and, if we count the subscriptions to the debt as paid, the board are now substantially free from indebtedness, with the departments under their care indicating at least as much promise of growth and increase of usefulness as at any time in the past. Certainly in view of this we may thank God and take courage.

In regard to theological education the changes of the period have terminated in the adoption of a new policy. Since 1870 various attempts have been made to meet the demand that something should be done to provide theological instruction for our students. But the invariable experience has been, that whatever might be attempted at Acadia in connection with this subject, a large number of our brethren were not satisfied. They urged that it would be better for our theological students to study elsewhere, and that the energies of our people should be concentrated on strengthening the arts course. In the midst of the perplexities of the board by reason of these conflicting views, the proposition came from our brethren in Ontario that all the Baptists of Canada should accept one institution as their theological school. We acceded to this and our deliberations and discussions regarding theological education are presumably at an end. Whatever the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces may judge to be best in the future, for years to come our churches will look to Toronto as the immediate source from which they are to receive their ministers and their missionaries. Here we ought to make grateful mention of the munificent liberality of Senator McMaster in bestowing such bountiful gifts to promote the education of ministers for the Baptists of Canada. Expressions of thankfulness are due to him for what he has done, and to God for all He has wrought through the heart and the hand of His honored servant.

The remaining subjects on the first list of committees appointed by the Convention will require but brief consideration. The Union Societies of that day are represented at the present time by the financial system adopted by the Convention in 1879. The confusion and conflict caused by separate and irregular appeals for funds by each board make it necessary that there should be some method for harmonizing the claims of different objects and educating the members of the churches to feel the constant obligations of duty in regard to all departments of public work. Whether the present system is as well adapted to our needs and condition as some other would be, is a question that will call for patient and wise study in the immediate future. The distribution of religious literature has always been regarded by the Baptists of these Provinces as of prime importance, and various agencies have been used for this purpose. A short time since, by the concurrence of the Convention, a separate society was formed for this particular object. It has entered into its chosen sphere of service with energy and wisdom, already giving promise of permanence and large usefulness. The denominational papers have never been directly connected with the Convention. But the fact ought here to be noted that after a separate existence of nearly forty years, the two papers within the past year have been united. So far as the influence of the press is concerned in producing unity and concentration of effort, henceforth our denominational work should be carried on in even better conditions than those which have existed in the past. Union with Canada is one of the subjects claiming the attention of the Convention to-day, as it claimed the attention of our predecessors more than a generation ago. Exactly how much the expression may mean now, it might not be safe to undertake to say; but in those early days it meant union in evangelical labors among the French-speaking people of Canada. Something has been attempted by our churches for the spiritual good of some of these people through all these years. But is it not time to inquire whether our sporadic and not wholly satisfactory efforts in this department might not well give place to the plans and laborers of one general board—possibly the Grande Ligne? Such a board, if it were composed of men intimately acquainted with the habits and condition of the population whose spiritual good is desired, and were aided, perhaps, by a French department in our theological College, could have at its command a large number of well-trained assistants, and would be better qualified to direct missionary labor in any part of the Dominion where a French-speaking population is found. How most effectually to aid disabled ministers and give assistance to the widows and orphans of deceased ministers,

has been a vexed question during the entire period since the formation of the Convention, and the problem is still unsolved. It is to be hoped that before long some suitable system may be put in operation by which the righteous obligations of the churches in regard to these objects may be in some good measure discharged. If there could be joined with this the administration of a sustentation fund by which every pastor laboring in an approved field should be assured of a minimum sum that would equalize somewhat the financial condition of men engaging for the sake of the churches in a common service, a large number of our ministers would be lifted out of the depressing circumstances in which they are now toiling, and, by reason of the added vigor and courage thus imparted to them, would become much more effective and useful as teachers and leaders of the churches.

This review of the various departments of the business of the Convention seems to me to disclose evidences of a good degree of spiritual health and normal growth. It might be thought pertinent to make a reference to the statistics of the relative dates. But this in itself would be misleading. If our records show that nearly one hundred ministers have been ordained in the last twelve years, they do not reveal the fact that a large number of candidates for the ministry, converted and educated among our people, have gone to the south and the west and are giving their strength to build up churches in strange lands. If our records show an increase of ten thousand in our membership in the last twelve years, they omit the fact that thousands of our church-members have gone from their native land and are scattered in almost all lands. We are eminently a missionary people, sending forth an almost unbroken current of christian men and women, some of whom in their new experiences of life may lose their spirituality, but multitudes of whom become elements of strength and success in communities where such helpers are needed. A partial view of this fact may awaken discouragement. We labor and struggle for the benefit of others at a distance from us. But after all this is the highest kind of life, if only our vision could be purified to see things as they are. Whether the world takes account of what we are doing or not, by the force of character and the earnest spirituality of these representatives who go forth from us, we may exert a power in behalf of truth and righteousness that shall be felt in the busy centres of commerce and on the prairies of the west where the vanguard of civilization are laying the foundations of christian states. If, notwithstanding this priceless contribution to the good of distant lands, there has been steady and

positive gain at home, we ought not to consider the measure of the blessing allotted to us small.

In closing this review two or three reflections of a practical nature arise. By geographical and political conditions these eastern Provinces constitute a community by themselves. The people dwelling here must be affected in common by these special conditions and moulded in their character to somewhat of a common standard. They are to a considerable extent separated from other people. They live largely among themselves. They must care for themselves. If our feeble churches and struggling interests are not helped and strengthened by ourselves, it is not probable that any one else will do it. If our educational institutions are not developed and made strong by ourselves, strangers will not come here to do it for us. It may not be possible for us to make for ourselves a great name by the largeness of our gifts and the magnificence of the scale on which our benevolent operations are maintained. But it is possible to find among ourselves all that is needful to make our churches the homes of intelligent and active christians, ready for every good work,—to provide them with a ministry which, uniting the graces of the spirit to a literary training suited to their work, shall be able to minister to the spiritual wants of a people hungering for the bread of life,—to train our youth to habits of obedience to Christ, leading them to see that any life that conforms to the Sermon on the Mount is honorable,—to shed upon the feeble churches and the less prosperous communities the perpetual dew of christian sympathy and benevolence, so that the most rugged places shall be made beautiful by the exercise of love to God and love to man,—to make the land the abode of an intelligent, moral and God-fearing people, who shall use the gifts of God's hand to honor Him and do good in the world. 'Happy is the people that is in such a case.' That blessing may be ours and it is enough.

But we must not forget that an ampler air is about us and that ours is a part of a larger land. Special duties are pressing on us now in regard to the moral and spiritual condition of the western Provinces. Other denominations are pouring in their thousands to shape and direct the growing population of those lands. We, the Baptists of the eastern and middle Provinces, are late and slow in taking hold of this great enterprise. As we sow, we shall reap. Natural compassion, patriotism, affection for our kindred who are settling in those distant parts by the thousand, love of truth for Christ's sake, all conspire to rouse us from our negligence and prompt us to do what we can that the gospel in its purity and power may be

exalted and honored in the formative period of the young but strong people who will so soon be a great power for good or evil in this Dominion.

Permit me in closing, to name our greatest need—the need of that which is indispensable to true success in the work to which we are pledged—the need of more spirituality, of more vital godliness. *Chosen before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Created in Christ Jesus unto good works:* Is this the description of some ancient people,—or of some ideal people,—or of all who are in Christ Jesus? The secret of the christian life, the blessedness of the life in Christ and for Christ,—when we understand these more perfectly in the more perfect development of that life within each of us, our power in the service of Christ will be greatly increased and our usefulness enlarged.



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