

Provincial Wesleyan.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 1870.
CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS DECLIN-
SION AMONG YOUNG
CONVERTS.

Revivals of religion are necessary to continued life in the Church, and for the salvation of the world. They cannot be sought too eagerly or prized too highly when of the right stamp. No prayer having reference to the prosperity of the Church and to the general advancement of Christ's cause among men, can be better fitted for utterance by Christian lips than the petition, *O Lord, revive Thy work.* Yet, beyond question, revivals upon a large scale often occur without conferring upon the Church that solid and permanent benefit expected from them. Multitudes have been added to the Church by revivals, and a goodly number of these have stood fast in their liberty, fought the good fight of faith, and in due time have, every one of them, in Zion, appeared before God. But vast numbers have slid back out of the Church almost as fast as they were brought into it, and the consequence has been that the Church has, in many cases, had little ultimately to show for even powerful revivals. Why is this the case? Why are there everywhere so many back-sliders from the faith once possessed by them? Scarcely any questions can be pressed or pondered of a more practical or important character than these. As might be expected, they have been variously answered.

By some it has been affirmed that the backsliding occurring among young converts is due to the unskillfulness or heedlessness of pastors who know not how to feed the lambs of the flock, or care not whether they were fed and guarded or not. They who speak thus declare that the lambs of the fold need the most vigilant, patient and tender treatment, and that such treatment is not always bestowed on them even by those pastors who are eminently successful in the work of conversion. Under such inefficient watch-care, it is said young converts are not enlisted in Christian work—they are not led to cultivate the advantages of Christian fellowship, and are not urged forward to the attainment of the privileges of the higher Christian life. They are left unaided to get on as best they can; and they do not get on well. Unexpected dangers appal them. Frequent failures discourage them. Slight declensions soon become confirmed back-slidings; and little leaks unheeded speedily sink the ship.

By others, it is said that the back-slidings of young converts are largely due to the cold, unsympathizing, worldly character of the older members of the Church, who are, it is said, not unfrequently spiritually indolent, heartless, powerless, unattractive, and whose daily practice is inconsistent with their daily profession. Chilled by coming into contact with these icy souls, or beguiled of the strength provided for them by taking as their own standard of attainment the average manifestation of spiritual life around them, young converts soon will away for want of power from on high. This state of things would rarely if ever occur, it is alleged, were the Church fully alive and warm-hearted in its love and sympathy. For a living Church would know how to keep its young converts alive.

Again, it is asserted by others, that were a pastor never so faithful, patient, wise and tender, and a Church never so holy, zealous and kindly-affectioned toward one another, the young convert must undergo his appointed trial. He must go down into the depths, and through the curling flames of the blazing furnace to have his endurance tried. He must wrestle with principalities and powers, and if he does not resist the devil, and watch and pray, it will fare ill with him, be he who he may. He must drag his bleeding feet over the ragged rocks that pave the straight and narrow path to the skies; or he will never reach the heavenly mansions; for if he loiters, the night will overtake him; if he wanders from the old highway in search of softer and smoother roads, he is lost. He must exercise his own limbs. He must decide for himself in the time of bewilderment and the hour of conflict. If he decides wrongly he must suffer. If he grows weary and ceases to travel he cannot get home.

Without doubt there is truth in all these statements; and they all contribute something towards the solution of the problem concerning spiritual declension following to so great an extent so closely upon religious revivals. But there remains much more to be said ere the solution can be considered complete. It is not our purpose to supply all that may be lacking in these statements. On one point only, omitted above, and that is that in all probability the apparent declension manifested in the reaction occurring after periods of religious revival is to a considerable extent owing to the fact that some, if not many, in times of strong religious excitement profess to be converted when they are not.

We are perfectly aware that such a statement should not be lightly or hastily made. We make it neither lightly nor hastily. The thought has been germinating in our mind for many years; and slowly it has grown within us into a strong conviction.

That there should be spurious conversions is not at all surprising. On the contrary it is perfectly natural that there should be tares among the wheat. The Lord Jesus hath forewarned us of the fact. As it is quite possible that often a very fine tares stalk looks altogether more promising than a very feeble and sickly wheat blade.

We are not sure but that in revival seasons our mode of operation is occasionally less guarded than it ought to be against tares. We are anxious to reap an early harvest. We are perhaps a little disposed to force the growth, and to economize toil in the labour processes. We entertain cheering, definite and comprehensive views of

the ability, the readiness and willingness of Christ to save to-day. In our joy and earnestness, we cannot see why sinners do not at once lay hold upon the strength of God. We grow impatient of delay; and perhaps hurry men a little incautiously into thinking that the tears of sympathy which they weep at the touching pictures which we draw are tears of penitence. It may be, also, that in our anxiety to see results we unwittingly and unwisely assure men whose feelings had been aroused by the scenes around them, rather than by the work of the truth and spirit within them, that the repose which they feel after the subsidence of their unbidden emotions, is the rest of the soul; into which they enter who believe by their heart unto righteousness. Thus it may easily happen that in our zeal for the salvation of men, and in our laudable eagerness joyfully to reap where we have tearfully sown, we may be wanting in that caution, and that pains-taking discrimination so eminently requisite in treating the case of persons apparently enquiring after God in times of revival.

But we approach a close this week by saying that three things strike us concerning revivals and their fruits, in their turn, equally important. First, no labour, of the right sort can be too great, if expended in seeking a revival. Secondly, no solicitude can be too deep, if its object be in securing genuine conversions in periods of religious awakening. Thirdly, no care and tenderness on the part of pastors and Christian societies can be too extreme when judiciously directed toward nourishing, cherishing and strengthening the Lambs of the Christian fold. Given such work for a revival, such discriminations in it, and such care after it, our belief is that the Christ-implemented goodness of young converts would rarely pass away like the early cloud and the morning dew.

J. R. N.

MINISTERS' SALARIES.

Mr. Editor.—Your English correspondent on the above subject writes evidently under pressure of a grave hint thrown out in the early stages of our discussion;—that some of our ministers might possibly find their way to other fields of labour. We had no intention of instancing in proof our arguments that a few had already gone to England and elsewhere. It was stated that some had really improved their position by a transfer to other Churches. This we can readily prove. But that our Brethren are desirous of leaving we do not assert; we know that some of them now with us would have accepted good offers in various directions were they not deterred from our Conference or Methodist. Human nature, however, is subject to change, and the removal of the temptation rests with our people.

Our friend across the Atlantic has also proved that the Ministers in England are no better off than ourselves. That is really sad for them! But he cannot institute comparisons justly between the English Brethren and us, as he has not seen the Brethren as very materially changed the cost of living and the commerce of these Colonies as it affects the income of the Ministers. Your other correspondents are doing good service. Let this subject be fully ventilated. Our people are reasonable and open to instruction, and the necessity for information on Ministers' Salaries appears in our papers as you have printed, evincing that good men are startled if not shocked by the state of things already revealed. Those Brethren who have passed through the privations of our work should give the public in brief the benefit of their experience.

It has been asserted by a few excellent Brethren that success in finance depends on the minister's business—that a certain number have never failed to secure their full allowances. There is force in that argument. Some are blessed with tact and perseverance and can strike a balance-sheet as vigorously as they can preach and pastorate. Others will secure their lawful due as British soldiers secure their emoluments—by dint of valour. But there are worthy men who shrink from agitation involving their own interests; and who are married to ladies brought up in refinement, whose lives are often embittered by the want of what the Church has marked down as their proper though stained claims. We know these beloved brethren and sisters and feel assured that, if the state of our connexion or their own Circuits required it, they would sacrifice their comfort readily for Christ's sake. But it is requisite to have a logic to show that any Minister in our day and country need really be crushed by a pittance of salary, doled out toward the end of the year, and frequently reduced shamefully in amount.

We have pursued the only course open to us hitherto in sustaining our cause among the poorer Circuits. They have been left to themselves, giving each a Grant as assistance. We all know the general effect of props when placed under human agencies; they will lean on them. And so our Grant has not only cramped the energies of our people, but also afforded a good pretext for depriving the Minister of a part of his salary. This Grant is not understood. In the estimation of one class it is a vast bank of gold from which the Conference may draw indiscriminately. Another class think we should abandon it altogether, and striking out for independence, appeal to our people on fair and imperative grounds. "A Helper" will do much, doubtless, toward setting the subject in its true light; but our whole economy of ministerial finance must be simplified forthwith. Are our Brethren of the Committee on Children's Fund and Circuit Finance cogitating this subject? Let an intelligent and liberal report be presented in June.

A WESLEYAN MINISTER.

ENGLISH METHODIST FINANCE.

DEAR MR. EDITOR.—The differences in the incomes or salaries paid to Methodist ministers in this country, to which reference was made in my first communication, doubtless appear considerable to many of your readers. They are determined in a vast number of cases by the Quarterly Meeting, which alone has control of the matter. They are fixed with reference to the cost of living, and to the due maintenance of the position in which the preacher is expected to move. When all these things are taken into account it will be found that there is not such a remarkable difference. The greatly-augmented expenditure of a family in cities and towns need scarcely be referred to in order to suggest the necessity of augmented allowances for those who occupy such positions.

No limitation is placed by Conference or by any Connexion Committee upon the amount paid to a minister, and yet even

the highest sum reported is very far from extravagant, and is such as would be considered altogether inadequate by the leading men of other churches.

In the case of the Circuits paying very small salaries to their preachers, the Conference has again and again made enquiry, and by means of the Committee of the Contingent Fund induced the Circuits in question to raise the allowances. This has generally been done on condition of the continuance of the grant, and, in many cases, its increase; the circuit pledging itself to an increased payment to its ministers.

When all this is done, there yet remains a numerous class of Circuits paying the very small amounts stated in my letter. For these is no remedy until the condition of the people is bettered, or some adequate plan of relief from without the Circuit, shall be carried into effect.

The demands upon the Quarterly Board for salaries, removals, and other expenses, are so defrayed from the following sources:—1st, the contributions in the classes, which are very carefully looked after, the wealthier being urged to give of their substance, and the smallest contribution from the poor accepted as a religious duty and privilege. 2ndly, the Quarterly Collections. These are taken up in every chapel, and constitute quite an important item of income. As in very few cases collections are made on every Sabbath, as with you, these stated collections demand and receive increased attention and hearty response. 3rdly, amounts from pew-rents which may be donated by the Trustees after defraying chapel expenses. 4thly, in addition to these sources of regular income, in almost every case necessarily exists for some special effort in the form of subscriptions, circuit trial lectures, &c. The office of Circuit Steward is no sinecure, and frequently involves pecuniary sacrifices in paying claims and waiting for the incoming supplies.

A great advantage in the English Methodist system of finance is, that all the preachers' claims are paid in full every quarter, and he is neither compelled to wait until the end of the year, nor discouraged by the prospect of a deficiency in the stipulated amount. It may be small and inadequate to his position, developing contrivance and sacrifice to make ends meet, yet it is sure to be paid. This is a point of honor from which I have never known a Circuit to depart.

A glance at the Minutes of the English Conference will show that there are about 250 Circuits receiving grants from the Contingent Fund. A very small proportion of these are new Stations or Circuits, or Home Missionary enterprises.

The greater part are old centres of Methodism, and which demand assistance to maintain the work in any degree of efficiency. In many cases the ministerial staff on these assisted Circuits consists of two ordained ministers and families, and one young man on probation.

In numerous instances it is found impracticable to carry out the Connexion rule, that Circuits receiving a young man's services for 4 years shall then provide for a married man; and they are allowed to retain their third preacher.

There is a gratifying amount of improvement in some districts, and each year a few Circuits extricate themselves from the dependent condition, while in other cases, from depression in trade, or emigration to other centres, Circuits sink from a self-sustaining position, and claim assistance in the form of a grant. Every Circuit in the Connexion is compelled, whether receiving aid or independent, to make collections in all the churches, and to accept of the Bill in its general provisions as it is, for it will improve the status of our Day schools, and subject them to the same Examination as the National schools. It will also find employment for all the Trained Teachers at our College at Westminster can furnish.

Much anxiety is being felt on this side on account of the missing steamer *City of Boston* now about 29 days out from Halifax. The papers urge many grounds of hope and furnish precedents for the extraordinary delay. We earnestly trust it may be all right with her, although tempest-driven. Her arrival will give joy to thousands.

Feb. 25, 1870. B.

PUBLIC TEMPERANCE MEETING AT CANNING.

The Temperance Orders which lately flourished in this Village having ceased to exist here, the working organizations, and the sale of intoxicating liquors being on the increase, the staunch temperance men of the place have moved to hold a general public Temperance meeting.

According to arrangements, and pursuant to notice given, the meeting was held in the Baptist Chapel, Canning, on Wednesday evening 9th inst. Although the weather and roads were altogether unfavorable, there was a good meeting. The meeting was opened with prayer by the Rev. Mr. Whitman, B. B. Woodworth, Esq., was chosen chairman, and David B. Newcomb, Secretary of the meeting.

Our society is formed to promote the cause of temperance in this place. The section of Cadets is composed of the young, handed together in an army under the guidance of older persons, to wage war against drunkenness. We wish to commence early in life in this war, that we never be tempted to enter upon the downward course of the drunkard. We do this because we see the temptations all around us of every hand. We feel alarmed lest some of the youth of this place be led astray and sink to the drunkard's doom. There are many boys and girls in this place, and some of them are our brothers and sisters, and our schoolmates and friends, and they are very dear to us. We are grieved to know that there is a licensed tavern among us for the sale of intoxicating liquors, and that there are several other places where intoxicating liquors are sold. We feel that as long as this state of things continues the boys of this place will not be free from the temptation to become drunkards. Besides this, we know with sorrow that there are other persons who are already hastening to a drunkard's grave. For these reasons we wish to ask all here assembled to help us in our undertaking. We feel that it is a good work for us to engage in, to promote the cause of temperance. It is a work that God approves; a work that must succeed. We expect also to learn habits of conducting public business properly, and to cultivate a public spirit, which will make us very useful in the world when we grow older. We therefore invite parents to encourage their sons, and daughters to join our society and help us on, and in the benefits. We are sure also that if we adopt the principles of total abstinence we shall be more likely to become Christians, and have our abode at last in Heaven among the pure and holy.

We hope, Mr. Chairman, that this meeting will result in much good to the cause of temperance in our community; and may we venture to express the hope, should this meeting result in the formation of an adult temperance society, that some members of it will join our section of Cadets, that in our arduous undertaking, the levity of youth may be tempered by the wisdom of age. Shall not the influence of the young and of the old be so united that the safe principles of total abstinence shall be adopted by all among us?

Rev. D. Freeman replied to this address in a very touching and pleasing speech of considerable length, with good effect.

Rev. Mr. Whitman, at a call from the chair, came forward in a very forcible and argumentative speech, delivered with his usual warmth and eloquence, and moved the third resolution of the evening, which is as follows:—
Resolved.—That the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks is every where a public injury, and should be held a public crime, and that the licensing of such an evil is wrong and ruinous, and wherever adopted has failed to extirpate or even diminish the evils of intemperance; that prohibition is the only safe legislation and the only legislation that can be practically enforced, and therefore that no law ever stringent, which recognizes the right to sell intoxicating drinks can receive our sanction.

This resolution was seconded by the Secretary of the meeting.

The foregoing resolutions were severally put to the meeting from the chair, and passed unanimously, except two or three dissenting voices to the third and last one. The discussion of the evening being then closed, it was unanimously Resolved, "That a copy of the proceedings be sent to each of the religious papers of this province, by the secretary of the meeting, for publication." The meeting closed with the benediction by the Rev. Mr. Hogg.

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Rev. D. Freeman replied to this address in a very touching and pleasing speech of considerable length, with good effect.

Rev. Mr. Whitman, at a call from the chair, came forward in a very forcible and argumentative speech, delivered with his usual warmth and eloquence, and moved the third resolution of the evening, which is as follows:—
Resolved.—That the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks is every where a public injury, and should be held a public crime, and that the licensing of such an evil is wrong and ruinous, and wherever adopted has failed to extirpate or even diminish the evils of intemperance; that prohibition is the only safe legislation and the only legislation that can be practically enforced, and therefore that no law ever stringent, which recognizes the right to sell intoxicating drinks can receive our sanction.

This resolution was seconded by the Secretary of the meeting.

The foregoing resolutions were severally put to the meeting from the chair, and passed unanimously, except two or three dissenting voices to the third and last one. The discussion of the evening being then closed, it was unanimously Resolved, "That a copy of the proceedings be sent to each of the religious papers of this province, by the secretary of the meeting, for publication." The meeting closed with the benediction by the Rev. Mr. Hogg.

By the general good feeling manifested and the favorable expression given by those present, the meeting may be considered a success.

DAVID B. NEWCOMB,
Secretary of the Meeting.

For the Provincial Wesleyan.

HALIFAX WESLEYAN TOTAL ABSTINENCE SOCIETY.

The annual meeting of this Society was held in the basement of the Brunswick street church on Friday evening last.

The audience was large and as a matter of course highly respectable.—The meeting was opened with singing and prayer, after which Rev. Mr. Milligan read an appropriate portion of Scripture.

Mr. Beales formerly of "Maine" but now residing in Halifax where he has made many friends by his fearless advocacy of Temperance principles, was the first speaker.

He addressed the assembly in his usual forcible and entertaining style.

