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1903. – GENERAL CONVENTIONS REPORT. – 1903.

WE have had three splendid General Conventions this year, and each of them very successful in all respects. The first one, on April 4,5, was in the South, where the "Truth People" are much less numerous than in other quarters of our land. It was held in Atlanta, Ga., which for many reasons may be styled the principal city of those parts. The gathering of friends was estimated at 150, while the meeting advertised to the public had an estimated attendance of 450. Nineteen symbolized their consecration by water immersion. The listed speakers were Brothers Stevens and Wilbor, representatives of the Atlanta Church, Pilgrim Harrison and Pastor Russell.

The spiritual power of the Convention was great, and we trust still abides in those who attended, and extends to their home-comrades who could not attend. The sentiments of the majority, we believe, were voiced by one old brother who boarded the train on which the writer departed. Shaking our hand warmly he said, "Brother Russell, I would not take a thousand dollars for the good I have received from this Convention; – and I am only a poor man, too." He is a mountain farmer who knows well what it means to combat the thorns and thistles and to eat his bread [R3250 : page 373] by the sweat of his face; yet he prized the spiritual blessings above all compare because of such were his treasures – heavenly.

THE DENVER CONVENTION.

The second Convention, at Denver, Colo., on July 10-12, was central to a large district not previously favored with Convention privileges. The friends in attendance were chiefly of Colorado, and from California, Nebraska, Dakota, Iowa, Kansas, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Utah, Indian Territory, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio and numbered about 350 earnest, zealous brethren and sisters, in about equal proportions. Thirty-six availed themselves of the opportunity

offered and symbolized their burial into Christ's death by immersion in water.

The principal public service was attended by about 900, and it is to be hoped that our Master's name and cause were honored and blessed by the grand seasons of refreshing here enjoyed. The listed speakers were Brother Hall of the local congregation, Pilgrims Williamson, Draper, Barton, Howel and Pastor Russell. "It is good to be here," seemed the general sentiment of all in attendance. Not by any [R3250 : page 374] means the least important of its sessions were the Testimony Meetings and the final Love Feast, at which many eyes were filled with tears as the company sang,

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above."

All seemed to have in mind the great Convention of the future which the Apostle designates "The General Assembly and Church of the Firstborns," in which we hope to participate and which will not break up forever. What a hope, – forever with the Lord and those who are his!

THE TORONTO CONVENTION.

The last Convention of the season has just closed at Toronto, Canada, – Sept. 5-7. We surely had a blessed season of spiritual refreshment. Many said, "This is the grandest we have ever had!" Yes! This is always the sentiment at every Convention, and it is really difficult to determine superiority when everything is so soul-satisfying and heart-uplifting. The listed speakers were Bro. Stovel of the Toronto Church and Pilgrims VanAmburgh, Hay, Harrison, McPhail, Barton, Streeter, Samson and Pastor Russell; but many others were heard from effectively in the Testimony Meetings, which continue to be amongst the most effective sessions of all Conventions.

The attendance was chiefly Canadian, and from New York, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois and Pennsylvania; the latter being the most prominent numerically. The number of "Truth people" was estimated at 800, while the attendance at the two public gatherings averaged about 1800 each – some estimating the number much higher. At the baptism service fifty-eight symbolized their burial into death with our Lord, and it surely was a solemn funeral occasion, yet one in which all rejoiced, remembering the promise, "If we be dead with him we shall also live with him." (2 Tim. 2:11.) The concluding session was a Love Feast long to be remembered. In some respects surely this last Convention deserves to rank chief of all Conventions thus far held under the auspices of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. Central to a large population and to the homes of a large number of the interested, the attendance of the Church and the public was larger than at any previous Convention. The attraction to the people of Toronto was thorough advertising and the best public auditorium.

The generous arrangements connected with these Conventions deserves a word of appreciation. The brethren of the entertaining Churches recognized the fact that hundreds of the Lord's brethren were coming at considerable cost, and concluded that no reasonable expense should be spared to make their stay pleasant and spiritually profitable. It is safe to say that the friends of the entertaining Church spent *pro rata* as much or more time and money than did those who came to them long distances. However, all was so cheerfully and heartily done, "as unto the Lord," that they evidently shared the great blessings of the Conventions also, proportionately.

NEXT YEAR'S CONVENTIONS.

It is too early to decide upon these definitely, but as the Grand Army Encampment will secure special railroad rates to Boston, and the World's Fair will probably secure special rates to St. Louis, these

two cities will probably have next year's General Conventions if the churches at each desire this arrangement.

