

THE NORFOLK CONVENTION

IT seems too stereotyped to say so repeatedly, "Our last convention was best of all." Yet how else can we properly report? At Indianapolis we said, "This is surely one of the best conventions ever held, if not the best of all." Nevertheless some who attended it went later on to the Niagara gathering, and said, "This is still better." And now, some who attended all three persistently claim that the Norfolk Convention was best of all. In the Editor's opinion these three seasons of refreshing were all so good as to be beyond comparison. Each, however, had its special features. The last continued longer than the others, and, besides, afforded to many specially favorable opportunities for fellowship en route, going and returning; and this we must reckon as one of the special Convention blessings. And these comparatively few who went from one Convention to another prolonged and increased their spiritual exhilaration as per the Apostle's advice: "Be not drunk with wine...but be ye filled with the Spirit."

CONVENTION OF BELIEVERS IN THE ATONEMENT SACRIFICE OF CHRIST – "A RANSOM FOR ALL"

Saturday, Sept. 28th, the friends began to arrive in goodly numbers and full of joyous anticipation of spiritual refreshment. The local friends, joined by several who went early to assist them (the Lord reward them all!), had made excellent arrangements for the comfortable entertainment of all, whose number was about 750 – some going and others coming throughout the eight days of the session. So far we have learned of none who went away without a blessing from the Lord.

The opening service at 10 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 29, started with a hymn of praise to God, after which Brother Russell led in prayer, invoking the divine blessing upon the Convention, and upon its influence in Norfolk, and on the dear friends far and near whose hearts were with us, and upon the influence of the Convention upon the little groups and classes represented – that a holy and blessed experience might result to the comfort and encouragement of many of the saints.

Brother W. W. Murray, as the representative of the local Church, then delivered an Address of Welcome and introduced Brother VanAmburgh as Chairman for the first four days of the Convention. Brother VanAmburgh at 11 a.m. delivered the first discourse, on "Redeemed" – Titus 2:13,14. The audience, nearly all "brethren," seemed very appreciative of what they heard.

The general attendance was 600 to 800, except for the publicly advertised discourse of Sunday afternoon on "To Hell and Back," delivered by Brother Russell. On that occasion a close estimate was 2200, though some guessed double that number. Excellent attention was given for nearly two hours. Some of the foremost people of the city were in attendance. The Mayor, introducing the speaker, without endorsing anything, asked a courteous and attentive hearing. The city was considerably stirred and two ministers attempted a public refutation – the Baptist preaching on "To Hell and to Stay" and the Methodist on "To Hell and be Damned." But "their guns were spiked," we feel sure, so far as those were concerned who received and read the freely distributed WATCH TOWER on "What Say the Scriptures About Hell?" And, by the way, all of our readers are welcome to these TOWERS *free*, for use amongst their friends. They discuss and explain every **[R4081 : page 325]** Bible text containing the word "hell," and various "parables and dark sayings," which are generally misunderstood.

At 7.30 p.m. Brother Russell spoke again, on "The Hopeless and the Hopeful." (Eph. 2:12,13.) Many of you already have this through the newspapers which publish a sermon each week.

MONDAY, SEPT. 30

The opening session was devoted to praise and testimony, after which Brother Russell answered Bible questions propounded by the audience.

At 2.30 p.m. Brother Alex. Graham delivered a very interesting discourse on the text, "Having Harps of God." At 3.30 a Testimony Meeting was held for an hour and a half.

Brother C. E. Fowler spoke in the evening, taking as his topic, "Overcoming – What? How?" The necessity for overcoming the world, the flesh and the Adversary was shown, and that faith and prayer and determination are necessary to success.

TUESDAY, OCT. 1 – COLPORTEUR DAY

After a Praise and Prayer Service, Brother Russell preached from the text, "He that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto eternal life." The usual congregation was present and the various features of Harvest work were referred to – "Colportering," "Volunteering," "Pilgrim Work," and the other numerous ways, great and small, by which all who will – all who love the Lord and the brethren and the Truth – may thrust in the harvest sickle. The wages were shown to be partly present but mainly future.

In the afternoon Brother J. H. Cole addressed the Colporteurs on successful methods, and gave very helpful and interesting illustrations along the lines of our circular, "Hints to Colporteurs."

The Colporteur Praise and Testimony Meeting in the evening was an excellent one and evidenced the fact that the dear Colporteurs are receiving a great blessing and are carrying blessings to others. Some thought this service alone worth all the Convention had cost them of time and expense. Many not Colporteurs were deeply moved and blessed by it.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 2

Our Sunrise Prayer and Praise Service at 5.30 a.m. was attended by about 450 to 500 of the friends. Brother Russell, who led the meeting, pointed out the fact that we are now in the Millennial Dawning and that God's promise is that "He shall help her (the Church) early in the morning." (Psa. 46:5.) The unusual hour, the fellowship, the hymns and prayers referring to our hopes of the dawning of Zion's glad morning, all conspired to a holy solemnity and blessed joy.

We had two hours of splendid Testimony and Praise Service, beginning at 10 a.m. One dear brother from the wilds of the North Carolina mountains, with tears of joy on his cheeks, declared that he must go home, for he was so full he could hold no more. But he remained, doubtless realizing with others that holy joy enlarges our hearts and increases our capacity.

At 3 p.m., in the largest Baptist Church in Norfolk, about 700 assembled for the discourse on "The True Baptism," by Brother Russell.

In all 53 were immersed. Two colored brethren purposed being baptised the next day in the river, because Southern usage forbade the use of the Church fount, but they were not permitted to do so.

In the evening Brother Bohnet delivered a very interesting and profitable discourse on "The Righteous shall Flourish like the Palm Tree."

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3

Brother A. E. Williamson arrived and became Chairman of the Convention for its latter half. The day was left open for rest and individual fellowshiping, the only general service being in the evening, when Brother F. Draper delivered a very interesting and helpful discourse on the text, "The Spirit, the Water and the Blood, these three agree in one." Brother Russell departed for Allegheny by the afternoon train. About thirty-five who learned of the time and place were present and gave him a hearty goodby. As he stood on the rear platform while the train pulled out all joined in singing, "God be with you till we meet again."

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4

After another splendid Praise and Testimony Meeting lasting an hour and a half, Brother M. L. Staples preached on "The New Creation." (I Tim. 3:15.) Many, we trust, were refreshed and strengthened in purpose.

In the afternoon the harmony of the Great Pyramid's Testimony with that of the Bible was forcibly presented by Brother H. C. Rockwell.

In the evening, following a Praise service, Brother W. J. Thorn addressed the Convention ably on the topic, "Full Assurance of Faith."

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5

Another good Testimony Meeting of an hour and a half showed clearly that as the Convention progressed many of the dear friends became more and more filled with the Lord's Spirit

which overflowed from their beaming eyes as well as in their fervent words. Then Brother S. D. Senor delivered an interesting discourse on "Gathering and Scattering."

The afternoon service was a discourse by Brother E. H. Thompson, whose topic was, "The Three Fires of the Atonement Day, and their Antitypes." His address was both interesting and instructive.

After a Praise service Brother A. E. Burgess gave the evening address on, "Study to Show Thyself Approved unto God: a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." He was heard with interest and profit surely.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6

The last day of this great feast opened with another stirring testimony meeting. Then Brother H. Samson spoke pointedly and feelingly on "The Witness of the Spirit."

The afternoon discourse was by Brother A. E. Williamson, whose topic was "The Bridal Garment." A [R4082 : page 326] large audience gave closest attention to this portrayal of how the robe of Christ's imputed righteousness becomes through consecration and obedience our Bridal Garment.

In the evening a symposium on *Love* was participated in by Brothers A. E. Williamson, S. Kuesthardt, D. H. Thornton, J. F. Rutherford and F. L. Hall. Then followed a splendid Love Feast, in which all participated with hand and heart and voice, bidding each other goodby and expressing the hope of meeting soon in the Great Convention beyond the veil – "the General Assembly of the Church of the First-Borns, whose names are written in heaven."

TWO PASSED ON BEFORE

On the Saturday preceding the Convention, Brothers H. Holmes and U. G. Munsell and their wives (all active Colporteurs) having arrived a little in advance were active in preparing for and welcoming others. Toward nightfall they went to a boat-landing to meet a party from Boston. There, learning that the boat that night would land at a different pier, the two brethren hastened to it, leaving the sisters to come on more leisurely. But, five minutes later, the two dear sisters were killed under the wheels of a shifting engine which suddenly came upon them from a freight-yard switch.

The finding of them a few moments later was a harrowing experience for their dear husbands, one of whom remarked, "If it had not been for the Truth and its blessed, quieting and hallowing influence I would at once have run to the river and suicided." The Lord's grace and TRUTH greatly sustained both of these brethren and those who sympathized with them in their grief. The remains were taken to their homes in Connecticut and buried there, steps being taken to secure an able presentation of their faith to their gathered friends. The husbands returned then and spent the closing days of the Convention – not in mourning, but in praising God for our blessed hope, which forbids our sorrowing as others who have no hope. We have the best of hope for both of the sisters, for their faithfulness and self-sacrificing spirit attested their devotion to God. No doubt their death shed a solemnizing influence over the Convention as a whole.
