

## MID-WINTER CONVENTIONS

OUR trial of Mid-Winter Conventions has proven only partly satisfactory. In several instances the cold and storms hindered large audiences, and on two or three occasions delayed our arrival on schedule time. The lesson is that hereafter we should not tempt Providence, but hold all Southern conventions in the winter and Northern conventions in the summer.

However, we are not complaining. On the contrary, no doubt the disappointments served to test our faith in the Lord's oversight of his work, and our submission to his providences. We are to remember how our Lord refused to leap from the pinnacle of the Temple, because such *faith* would be tempting Providence.

The friends everywhere got a reward for their labors of love in preparing for the meetings, even when the expected results were not attained – so did the speaker.

The Pittsburg Convention was a success in every way. The forenoon session was devoted to the election of servants for the Church for 1910; the Editor had been re-elected pastor for 1910 on the previous Sunday. The Testimony Meeting which followed the election was a most interesting one.

The afternoon session for the public was in the Allegheny Opera House, where about 1,000 gave close attention – an excellent audience for the cold and unfavorable weather and the slippery condition of the streets.

In the evening Bible House Chapel was crowded beyond its capacity. Following a discourse we shook hands with the company and took train for Elgin, Ills.

At Chicago, we were joined by about 100 in two special cars. Notwithstanding the cold weather we had refreshing there, as also at Rockford and Milwaukee.

At Indianapolis a Three-Day Convention was attended by about 400 from nearby points. Much as we should have enjoyed staying to its conclusion we could not, but after one day sped on to Columbus, O., and then to Brooklyn. At both of those places the results were most instructing and seemingly profitable.

At Richmond, Va., the storm hindered our arrival in proper season, but did not hinder about 1,300 hearing a public address (by Brother Wright), nor hinder about 300 of the friends hearing us at the evening session.

Knoxville, Tenn., then Atlanta, Ga., then Birmingham, Ala., and Memphis, Tenn., had interesting meetings; the latter two lasted for three days each, being supplied by Pilgrims as announced.

At Fort Smith, Ark., there was also a Three-Day Convention – remarkably well attended. Nowhere did the friends appear more zealous and enthusiastic. Before 6 o'clock next morning about 65 were at the depot to bid us a final adieu. They sang for us, "God be with you." Our next stop was at St. Louis, Mo., where we addressed about 250 of the interested from 9 to 10.30 p.m. Quite a number accompanied us to the depot.

The Sunday at Chicago was a grand one, which we and many will long remember. We arrived in season to give our testimony at the Testimony Meeting of the forenoon. The afternoon meeting at the great Auditorium was a success. The dear friends had spared neither time nor money nor labor to make it a success. About 3,500 were present. We had excellent attention. Many prayed and all hoped that the results would be helpful to some and to the honor of our Lord.

In the evening we had a heart-to-heart talk with the interested for nearly two hours more – on the Covenants, the Ransom, etc. After it we had a season of handshaking and good wishing for each other's future, as the dear friends, tired, but happy, went to their homes. The meeting, we learned, cost the friends over \$800 and many days of hard labor in circulating PEOPLES PULPIT, ads., window cards, etc.

At Bloomington, Ills., the meetings were not so large, but they were very good and we trust very helpful to the friends as well as to some of the public.

The Dubuque appointment was delayed by the cold and storm; but nevertheless we had an hour for the interested and fully two hours for the public. The class here is small but very intelligent and earnest. We hope [R4569 : page 76] that others will be added ere long – "of such as are disposed for eternal life."

The snowstorm delayed our train so that we missed our St. Paul-Minneapolis appointment; but the Lord provided a substitute in Brother George Draper, and the friends had a grand time. Spelling our disappointment with an *h* instead of a *d* we rejoiced to learn a lesson in patience and perseverance, and pressed onward. We have promised the dear Minneapolis friends a Sunday Convention, if possible, next time and as soon as possible.

Winnipeg, Manitoba, our next appointment, was reached in good time. We were privileged to join in the morning Testimony Meeting, which we greatly enjoyed. The afternoon meeting for the interested was well attended and interesting. Here again we set forth and illustrated the various features of the philosophy of the Atonement. The evening meeting for the public was well attended. Manitoba Hall, said to hold 1,200, was crowded – some stood and many were unable to gain admittance. The interest was

excellent to the close. We left for our train while the closing hymn was being sung.

Hamilton, Ontario, our next appointment, was reached in good season. We enjoyed a Social Tea with the local class and then gave a public address in the Y.M.C.A. Hall to a very attentive audience. After a refreshing night's rest we proceeded to our appointment for Sunday, January 9, at Toronto, Canada, accompanied by about thirty of the friends.

The Toronto meetings were fine in every sense of the word. They began on Saturday, Pilgrim Brother MacMillan having preceded, and continued over Monday, Pilgrim Brother Hersee serving then. The report is that the friends to the number of nearly three hundred gathered from all parts of Canada and had a delightful season of refreshing. The Sunday forenoon session was for the interested. We discussed the philosophy of the Atonement, apparently much to the satisfaction of the hearers.

The afternoon session for the interested was held in the Royal Alexandra Theatre. Its capacity, 1,600, was overtaxed, hundreds being turned away disappointed. One gentleman almost had a row with the police. He had been reading the sermon and had come twelve miles from the country and wanted to have a chance to stand in the rear, where there were already enough for the safety rules. He was later quietly located at the rear of the stage. The large audience gave splendid attention and we hope some good was accomplished.

We subjoin a letter for two reasons: **(1)** To show that there are evidently some true, ripe grains of wheat still in Babylon, and **(2)** to show that it requires more than one meeting and more than one tract to sufficiently arouse such to even write for further reading matter – so strong is the prejudice and so false the misrepresentation of the Truth.

"DEAR SIR: –

"TORONTO, Jan. 12, 1910.

"It was my joy and privilege to listen to your lecture in the Royal Alexandra Theatre on Sunday last. According to your invitation I am writing for a copy of your printed address on "Hell," and trust same will come to hand in safety.

"From a boy I have taken a heart-interest in Christianity, and am seeking day by day to make Christ king over my life. My soul seems, naturally, to respond to his claims, and, to sum the matter up briefly in Professor Drummond's words, I believe that 'To become like Christ is the only thing in the world worth craving for; the thing before which every ambition of man is folly and all lower achievement vain.'

"And yet, Pastor Russell, there has been all the way through the bitter struggle with *doubt*; books like Paine's 'Age of Reason' having been largely the cause, perhaps. Being a profound lover of books, and with an earnest desire for truth, naturally, as a boy of eighteen or twenty, I came in touch with literature treating the Bible from countless viewpoints. And yet, perhaps, over and above all this, the Church's doctrine of Eternal Punishment has always been one of the main barriers to a whole-hearted acquiescence to the message of the New Testament.

"Is it any wonder, then, think you, if I should appreciate beyond telling such an interpretation of the Christ message as you give? How it seems to lift the burden of gloom, and breathe new hope for the sin-maimed victims of heredity and environment, whom the Church of old would condemn to a hopeless and terrible eternity!

"The silence of the present-day Church on this subject goes to intimate that it is no longer in the thralldom of so terrible a doctrine. [R4570 : page 76]

"However, Pastor Russell, there are quite a few passages in Holy Writ that are hard to understand in the light of this *newer* interpretation. I should be, indeed, grateful to you if you could let me have any pamphlets treating this subject efficiently; also advise as to any books I might procure that would help me to a better understanding of that Truth of which Christ is the unique *centre*.

"I have desired for years past to enter the ministry, feeling that that is what I am, perhaps, best fitted for. So far – principally through lack of capital – I have not realized my desires. However, the way may yet be opened; and, if so, I would like to take out into a sin-darkened world the Christ evangel in all its completeness; hence the need for more light.

"I may never meet you, Pastor Russell, but I am truly thankful for having *heard* you on two occasions in this city. I suppose it will take nothing less than an eternity to estimate the vital influence of such a life in the community.

"Thanking you in anticipation of a reply, with booklets, believe me,

Sincerely,

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