

[R4589 : page 110]

RE FIFTH-SUNDAY LOCAL CONVENTIONS

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: –

I heartily enjoyed my visit yesterday and Saturday with the dear ones at Canton in their "Fifth-Sunday local convention," and thank you for affording me the blessed privilege to meet with them. Enclosed find program. It was my privilege to address the local class twice on Saturday and the general assembly twice on Sunday, besides the Berean lesson after-talk.

Brother, you should have been present at the morning testimony meeting and heard the splendid testimonies of the dear friends. It would have comforted your heart to hear yourself so frequently referred to as the faithful servant of the Lord, and the assurance of loyalty to your teachings, and the confidence in you as a loving brother, a noble-minded man, whose every word and act bespeaks the thorough Christian. I fear, however, your modesty would have prompted you to leave the hall before half a dozen testimonies had been given, for every one of them had some favorable allusion to yourself and your service. Truly it was good to be there, and when finally the Vow song was sung by the entire congregation tears of joy came to more eyes than mine. It sent thrill after thrill through my being until I could hardly refrain from shouting, and you know I am not easily swayed by emotion.

I have perhaps been to twenty conventions, large and small, since coming into the Truth in 1892, and write truly when I assure you that this little convention of about 200 Truth friends afforded me greater pleasure than any of the others. Possibly, as we come nearer the goal of our hopes, we more and more appreciate the sweet fellowship of the saintly ones of like precious faith, and possibly the attitude of the opposing ones draws us closer and closer together. Often, on the farm in my earlier days, when some

strange dog or other animal would come near the sheep, I noticed how they would huddle together as though for mutual protection. Just so when we see enemies near, we, like sheep, instead of scattering, draw closer together. The dear sheep about Canton are drawn very, very close to you, dear Brother. Not only would the sheep in threatened danger bunch together, but they kept close to the one who fed and cared for them. The sheep of the Lord well know who it is that is supplying them the wholesome spiritual food today. The goats are ever on the alert for brush and leaves, which they prefer. Peter was admonished of the Lord to feed the lambs and sheep, but he could not hope to satisfy goats with sheep provender. Neither can you or any of us.

Some of the friends at Canton told me of the effort of a certain brother who came amongst them to turn them out of the way by what they considered were exaggerated or wrong assertions. They took note of his changed deportment from what he had been on former visits when he came to them in like faith. He preferred to talk mostly on matters of no interest to them. He mentioned religious matters only in connection with evil speaking, slander and backbiting until he fairly disgusted his hearers. But not so the certain class who seemed to enjoy his unchristian attacks on the life and character of another. The friends called to mind the text, "Speak evil of no man," and especially Paul's admonition prohibitive of the speaking aught against an *Elder*, and thus he was unconsciously "driving nails into his own [R4590 : page 111] coffin," as the Germans say. I cautioned the friends to ever beware of anyone who allows himself to speak evil of others, assuring them that even were the statement entirely true the one who so speaks is manifestly more guilty in God's sight than is the one he is endeavoring to malign and injure.

In giving my own testimony in the general assembly, prompted by the other testimonies of the friends present, I told

the dear ones of how I had for many years been a member of the Bible House family, had eaten and lived there, and even enjoyed your uncomfortable bed-lounge with you on various occasions since the year 1895, and that never once in all that time had I heard a cross or angry word from your lips, and that never had I known you to do or say aught unbecoming a Christian and a gentleman. Brother, I may have been somewhat personal, but in view of some malicious attacks that had been made on you behind your back I could not refrain from uttering the truth in your defense, although I am well aware of your practice to make little or no defense of *yourself*, but to vigorously defend others, or the Truth, or a matter involving a principle or doctrine. While I can say, All honor to the man who can adhere to such a policy persistently, yet sometimes I feel that you really ought to defend yourself, if not for your own sake, for the sake of many dear ones on whose shoulders part of the burden falls. You always say in substance, "The Lord knows all about it," and with him you let it rest. The letter enclosed contains a sentence right along this line. You will not need to return it.

I think these Fifth-Sunday conventions are a means of great blessing to our people, stimulating and refreshing. I would like to hear from the friends elsewhere as to their experience re these little gatherings. I feel like encouraging all the Truth friends to institute these occasions of spiritual uplift. I will do all in my power to assist. Both at Detroit and Canton they worked me pretty hard, yet it was joy to serve the friends. I regret my inability to serve as I should like. The Lord, however, knows I am willing to do the best I can. The bond of Christian love was strengthened in the heart of everyone who attended yesterday's convention, I am sure, and you are more dearly than ever entrenched in the hearts of all who were there. God bless you and keep you in his tender care.

Thanking you once more for making it possible for me to be there, I remain in loving sympathy,

Your Brother in Christ, our Advocate and Lord,

J. A. BOHNET.

=====