

The Need and Opportunity of the West.

DEAR MR. EDITOR:—I have only time for a few burning words. We are in the very heart of the conditions that stir and warm a Christian's blood. Three sentences will describe the situation as it appeals to us.

First. We have no money and we are in debt.

Second. We have been forced to decline the appointment of nearly a score of men who have applied for work in this convention field.

Third. The people are coming to this country with a rapidity that would excite and exhilarate the driest and dreamiest Baptist in Canada if he could only see them.

Now, brethren, let us explain ourselves and at the same time appeal to yourselves. For the past few years the Baptists of Manitoba and the Northwest have tried to catch up a little with the growth of the population. We were late in getting a good start in this country, and since we have started, our progress has been greatly retarded by lack of funds. During the last few years we obtained larger gifts than formerly from eastern Canada, which was largely due to the personal canvass made by Supt. Vining. By this increase of financial strength the work has been pushed with much vigor and fraught with great results. But it requires money to hold what money enabled us to obtain. And to our embarrassment this year we discovered an unlooked for stoppage in the source of supply just at a moment when there was the greatest possible need of an increased income. We have been faced by the fact that our Maritime brethren because of financial stringency could not permit our representative to visit their churches, to raise funds; and we have been advised by our Ontario brethren that we cannot expect as large gifts from them as formerly. And so who can describe our feelings as we are pressed back upon our own ground to watch a depleted treasury, on the one hand, and the forward rush of the incoming thousands whom we are unable to follow with the gospel, on the other. Our own people have responded nobly considering all things. And some of the stories of sacrifices made would touch the souls of those most obdurate to loves tenderest appeals if only they could see them as they were revealed to us. I am sure, however, that it will interest and inspire the Baptists of Canada to know this general fact that our people have raised already in cash about six thousand three hundred dollars, this convention year. And we expect between seven hundred and a thousand more before we close the books for the year.

This has been given for missions alone in response to the appeals made by our mission boards. And when you remember that we have only sixteen self-sustaining churches in all this country you will understand the sacrifice our churches have made to do this. Our mission churches, of which we have seventy, have responded very liberally for the most part, to the call for enlarged offering to the work.

But I have not yet told you what you must know if we are to avoid retrenchment. We need at least seven thousand dollars if we close the convention year without debt. And how can we open new work when we cannot carry our present work without debt? And how can we be reconciled to the thought that we are to open no new fields this year when as a matter of fact our present working force ought to be doubled at once. A brother in an important newly settled district wrote me as follows:—"We should have a minister here at once. The people will support the first man who comes into this field. Can't you put a man here?" This is one of many openings; and we are unable to respond. The day was (and is yet) in certain places in Canada where our missionaries could not find an opening to preach the gospel. But here are wide open doors and we are invited to enter them and we cannot. How long shall this continue? I am safe in answering that it will continue no longer, when the Baptists of Canada realize that the greatest mission field at this hour in the Dominion, is Manitoba and the Northwest. In saying this we desire to give the fullest emphasis to the importance of our home mission work in every other convention; but we have learned what it means to be in with the people. And to meet the people as they come is infinitely better than to follow them afar off as alas we too often have done.

But let us be silent for a moment as we hear the voice of Alexander Grant who though dead yet speaketh. He utters one word. And who that heard him say it can ever forget it? "Horizon." Was he a prophet? Look at the facts. During the last ten years the population of Manitoba and the Northwest increased at the rate of twenty thousand per annum. That was a large growth for a comparatively new country. But if the inrush of people for the last half year is any safe criterion upon which to base our estimate, we are safe in saying that in one year from May 1st, 1902, the population of this country as given in the latest census returns shall have been increased by at least one hundred thousand people. This is horizon. And at the same time the Baptists of Manitoba and the Northwest are being forced to look about them to ascertain if there is any place where they might cut off their efforts. "Horizon" and retrenchment. Can these two words go together? No! No! Horizon always, retrenchment never.

Again the number of immigrants arriving from the United States alone was 3243 during the month of March. And the British and American immigration for the first three months of this year was over ten thousand. Baptists of Canada lift up your eyes and look upon the fields. This is our day of opportunity. To miss the openings and the opportunities of this hour in this great country with the resources that we have at our command would be an inexcusable never-to-be-forgotten blunder, made in broad daylight with our eyes wide open. It cannot be, it must not be.

I was assisting the pastor of one of our churches a short time ago where a gracious revival was in progress. I spoke on missions one Lord's day morning and at the close of my address the pastor said one of the most touching things I ever heard. He said "Let us be generous in our support of mission work. I came here from the East an avowed infidel—a mocker of the religion of Jesus Christ. I attended services at one of these little mission churches and while there God led me into the light. I love our mission churches." The brother to whom I refer is the indefatigable and successful pastor of Calgary church—J. W. Litch. The money you sent us from the East made it possible to maintain a church through which there was converted a man through whom scores of souls have been brought to Jesus. Oh, what a divine privilege is this to send and save. Send money and save men.

But I must now close. Baptists of Canada, if ever you had a desire to do a noble deed have it now. If ever you were possessed of an earnest longing to help a great cause be possessed now. And if ever you gave when there was an actual all-worthy, soul-stirring, ever-increasing, heart-breaking need give now.

I have at this moment received a letter from Bro. C. C. McLaurin in which he states that he has opened up a new field at Arcola which will likely be self-sustaining for the summer. This is another proof of our opportunity. Brethren don't be slow to offer your sacrifice for this work. Hear the call of your children. Hear the call of many voices, of many peoples, from many countries, as they gather from their native climes into the very heart of our fair Canada and call her home. Let the Baptists of the Dominion join hands to surround them with a hearty welcome, and to "declare unto them that which we have heard and seen" of Christ's love. Let us pray for the day when the land of golden fruit and the land of golden rock shall sit down with the land of golden grain in Baptist federation under the motto "Canada for Christ."

Meanwhile let us remember that service means sacrifice, that prayer means power, that Western work needs Eastern funds and that H. E. Sharpe, Winnipeg, is the Treasurer of our Convention.

W. T. STACKHOUSE, Supt. of Missions.

A Heathen Festival.

HOW WE CAME TO WITNESS IT.

DEAR MISSION BAND BOYS AND GIRLS:—

A few days ago I had quite a new and interesting experience which I am sure many of you would like to hear about. The story is likely to be rather a long one, and what I write this week will be only by way of introduction.

We are on tour. Our present headquarters is a village eighteen miles from Bimlipatam. At this season, being one of the harvest times, the men, women and children of the working class are very busy. Very few of them can spare time during the day even to listen to the gospel. But at night, after they have returned from the field and have satisfied the cravings of hunger with the most simple supper imaginable, they will congregate about us by the score (and often by hundreds) and listen to our preaching with real earnestness till 10 or 11 o'clock. A few nights ago we had more than eight hundred listeners till after 11 o'clock. It was a large village and we had the magic lantern. Then you can understand why we plan to do the best part of our work at night.

Last Friday afternoon at the close of our daily Bible class, I said to the two preachers who are with me: "Well brothers, what village shall we go to tonight?" Appalunsiyah answered, "I think we will find very few people in any of the villages either tonight or tomorrow night. They will all be away to Ramateerthamu." Now there's a new word for you. It is the name of a village where a great heathen festival takes place every year. If we look a little closely at the etymology of the word it will help us to understand the meaning of the festival. It is really a combination of two words, namely "Rama" plus "Teerthamu." "Teerthamu" means a holy place or Heaven. Rama is the name of one of the old mythical heroes, supposed by the Hindus to have been an incarnation (a human form) of the Supreme Being, Vishnu. As we believe the Lord Jesus Christ was God made man, so the Hindus believe that Rama was Vishnu made man. Rama is a very great and noble being, in the Hindu's estimation, and hence nothing can be more important than to secure his favor. Whenever the Hindu writes a letter

or makes out an account, he begins with the words, "Blessed Rama," which serve at once as a title of respect and a prayer for Rama's favor. Even the mere repeating of the name is supposed to bring great blessings. Not long ago a young Hindu student was writing on his B. A. examination in the Madras Christian college. One of the subjects he knew scarcely anything about. The questions puzzled him. He became confused and could not even write one answer properly. But he busied himself during the entire hour writing that sacred name, Rama, many hundred times. And I am told that the young man was quite surprised that Rama did not therefore induce the examiner to pass him. Whether this is true or not, I do not know, but it is certain that few names are on the Telugu's tongue so frequently as this; and few if any of their gods are more real than Rama. Rich and poor, learned and ignorant, high and low, revere his very name as divine.

Now I hope "Ramateerthamu" will be English to you. The village by that name is believed by many to be the holy place or heaven of the god Rama. Just back of the village is a huge high hill of solid, smooth-surface rock. Once upon a time, long years ago, Rama suddenly appeared out of the bowels of that rocky mass. At least so they say, and so many superstitiously believe. Probably you would be more likely to call such an appearance a volcanic eruption. At any rate it is in commemoration of this marvellous event, and in honor of this (in the Hindu estimation) great and glorious god, that a largely attended festival is held in the village Ramateerthamu every year.

When the preacher told me that thousands of people would gather there from all the surrounding villages; and that some would come from homes more than a hundred miles distant, I said, "Brothers, many of those people are trying to find God. Their souls are burdened with sin. Why should not we go there and tell as many as will hear us, of Him who said, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest?'" The proposal was heartily received by the preachers, and we decided to spend Saturday night and Sunday at the heathen festival, not to worship Rama, but to preach Christ Jesus the Lord of life and love, and the Saviour of the world.

Next week I shall try to give a few notes as to what we saw and heard on the way.

Yours and His,

RALPH E. GULLISON.

On tour 18 miles from Bimlipatam, 18th March, 1902.

From Heart to Heart.

BY PASTOR J. WHEB.

"My meditation of Him," says the Psalmist, "shall be sweet." True happiness is that which the soul enjoys. Beautiful surroundings do not always impart pleasure.

When the soul is quickened by the Holy Spirit, how different are its thoughts and desires! Look at the returning prodigal. Is this the man who left his family a few years ago, proud, haughty, sensual, and hateful? What a change has taken place! How different are his thoughts of home and father now!

What a supply of thought for soul-meditation—"Of Him!" With our souls surrounded by God, with our hearts filled with his loving spirit, and with our minds illuminated by his Word, what inspiration! What exalted ideas are conceived of God as we thus meditate!

How can we think of God so as not to shut out any one part of his character? All the prophets and apostles and the whole church of Christ exclaim in one united voice and answer, "God is love." This, then, shall be the key-note of our meditation.

Our blessed Redeemer is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, yet he dwells with him who is of a lowly, contrite and humble spirit.

When John saw the glorified Saviour as the high and lofty One, he fell at his feet as dead; such dazzling glory was too much for him. But when he felt that gentle touch, and heard that friendly voice saying, "Fear not," he revived, he knew then that he was still "that disciple whom Jesus loved."

Man could not approach the mountain of fire and smoke: he could not stand in God's presence while the fierce lightning of wrath flashed around him. But when he turns to Calvary; and when love flows from the great, loving heart of God, and when love-cords are thrown around him, he finds himself soaring upward to the glory-throne which outshines ten thousand suns and he is not afraid.

What a relief it is, when the mind is tired through over-work, to leave the houses and streets and factories and hurry and care of the smoky, throbbing city, and go out into the country and behold nature in its native and varied beauty! How restful is the quiet forest with its tall and stately trees!

How delightful, after being shut in through sickness, to feel the soft breath of the wind, and to hear the gentle rustling of leaves and the sweet song of birds!