

ore leave all with him, asking but to be made holy like him in his way:

"November 5.—A great storm, which would be called a 'hurricane' at home, has delayed our trip. These come upon us very suddenly. The night before, as I lay in bed, the natives were trundling hoops by the moonlight, throwing their arrows and spears at a mark, and jumping the rope, while their laughter and glee was really infectious. Suddenly the squall broke, the wind sweeping down the mountain in fiercest style, the heavy timbers tumbling over their sides, and the rain pouring in sheets. We feel such a storm under our thatched roofs made of leaves, and we and our things must be on the move until it is over. But the sun with his bright beams will again dispell the darkness, and tomorrow we embark.

"November 6.—Ourselves and things we need for the jaunt are to be stored in the smallest possible compass, and our escort—a half dozen boat-loads of natives—think it an occasion for a great deal of loud and fast talking. Winding along the beautiful shores of Ponapé, we lift our hearts in prayer that God will go with us and prepare the way for much good to be done. Friends at home would think this a novel way of travel, but surely not without interest and incident.

"Already we have a sensation—a native lad overboard. But a strong arm pulls him in, screaming with fright at his unexpected bath. Now comes the cry, 'A waterspout!' How wonderful! Three or four miles from us rises a great column of water directly into the sky, and soon fading away like smoke. Now we are nearing our first landing, at a station called 'Tomoro,' not to stop long on account of the tide; but the people gather on the shore while we sing and pray with them, and after a few parting salutations we push off again. Then we lunch on some cold yams left from breakfast, taking bread-fruit and sugarcane for desert.

"Now our brawny natives start out for a race; 'who shall get into the channel first?' ah, how they pull at the oars and laugh and shout! Now it rains violently, and I am hid under the *kotouk*—a kind of umbrella pulled over the canoe; I am forced to lie down, and can hardly find elbow-room enough to scribble. The wind is high, rocking the canoe about like a feather. The water dashes in, and we are cold and sea-sick. But the wind and rain will soon be over, and I lie and think of him who oft on Galilee was rocked in the cradle of the deep, and wonder if these grand old hills will ere long resound with Zion's songs.

"We land at 'Paliker,' eight miles beyond, in a drenching rain. The house of the chief, where we are to make our headquarters, is situated on one of the mountains, and we are well nigh exhausted in climbing the rocky side, slippery with mud. Such a plight! how it would shock some of my nice friends! But the chief has a decent house with two rooms, so we have an opportunity to remove our wet and soiled clothing; and how comfortable, and thankful we are to be once more dry!

"This chief and his people are nominally Christians—that is, they have given up their worship of spirits, and are desirous of learning of the true God. So they 'receive us gladly,' and with all the hospitality with which they were acquainted. This chief and his brother have adjoining domains, and are nearly equal in power, this one having precedence only on account of age. They both have a plurality of wives; this one has seven, and all except the first are young and pleasing in appearance; all were neatly dressed in clothes that Mrs. Hart had taught them to make. One bright little thing, only fourteen years old, quite won my heart with her sweet smile and winning ways. The giving up these superfluous wives is often the great test of Christianity with a chief. They are usually greatly attached to them, and know not what to do with them if they put them away. It is against their law for one who has been put away by a chief ever to marry again.

"Many of the people here can read and write, and they have been taught only by our native Christians, who go about from place to place teaching and scattering the good seed. We were delighted to find the progress they had made, and their eagerness for more, as our dark-skinned sisters gathered about us.

"After spending some hours in teaching, and then an evening service, we spread our blankets on the floor, stretched our mosquito-nets, and laid our weary selves to rest. The floor was hard last night, but I think we shall get accustomed to it, like good soldiers.

Correspondence.

For Christian the Messenger.

Ministerial and Missionary Conferences.—Their utility and how to conduct them.

A PAPER READ BY REV. W. H. WARREN BEFORE THE ANNAPOLIS COUNTY MINISTERIAL AND MISSIONARY CONFERENCE, AND PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

It has occurred to me that a paper on the design of Ministerial and Missionary Conferences and the best method of conducting them might be of some practical value at the present time. As our own Society is but in its infancy, we may in all modesty assume that it affords considerable room for improvement, and that a little careful thought and discussion in regard to the matter may lead to beneficial results.

The first question that claims our attention is this: What need is there for such a Society as that which we are now considering? It will not be difficult to give a satisfactory answer to this inquiry. That a Society of this kind is necessary to the proper maintenance of our ministerial and missionary enterprises must be obvious to every person who gives the subject a moment's reflection. In religious as well as in secular work isolation is greatly detrimental to success. Among Baptists, especially among those who hold extreme views in relation to church-independence, there is always a dangerous tendency to such isolation. Each minister becomes a pope, and his church is regarded as his See. Room is thus given for wide differences, not only in methods of work, but also in doctrinal views and teachings. Our annual Conventions and Associations tend in some measure to check these divergencies, but only to a very limited extent. Our denominational convocations are for the most part too exclusively devoted to mere routine business to be of much service in promoting doctrinal unity among the churches or in giving attention to the minor questions and difficulties which are continually arising among our brethren. Educational and missionary topics take up all the available time on such occasions; and papers on doctrinal subjects, or discussions on church government, are usually at a discount. But papers and discussions of this kind are much needed, and there should certainly be a time and place for giving them the attention they deserve.

Besides this, there is need of our meeting oftener than once a year for the purpose of mutual assistance and consultation. A quarterly meeting of the pastors and delegates of the churches comprised within each respective County seems to supply this need to a very satisfactory degree. Among the many advantages arising from such frequent conferences, a few of the more prominent may be mentioned.

1. Meetings of this kind tend to promote fraternal feelings among neighboring ministers and other brethren. By frequently associating and freely exchanging views in relation to our work we become more sympathetic and helpful toward each other. There can thus be a little mutual burden-bearing, and joys can be shared in common. Many a toil-worn and zealous servant of God becomes desponding, like Elijah, from a conviction that he is alone and unaided in his arduous labors. And yet, like the "prophet of fire," he may be groaning under imaginary burdens and filled with groundless apprehensions. The opportunity of associating with his brethren is all that is necessary to convince him that he is surrounded by sympathetic hearts and helping hands. The success and happiness of each pastor depend to some extent upon the good-will and sympathy which exist between him and his neighboring brethren in the ministry. "How good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

2. These meetings furnish a suitable stimulus and variety in our intellectual culture. Some ministers cease to be students the moment they complete their collegiate course. How often have we heard pastors exclaiming, "I have no time to read, no time to write, and scarcely time to think." But if pastors would avoid superficiality and common-places in their pulpit ministrations and retain the confidence and esteem of their congregations, they

must continue to be industrious students, reading the most useful works, writing their thoughts with care and accuracy, and comparing their views with those of their brethren as often as opportunity permits. Our conferences are designed to encourage such efforts. The necessary preparation for these meetings, the reading and hearing of well-written papers on various subjects of general interest, and the free discussion of important topics exert a powerful influence in keeping us out of ruts and grooves, in leading us into new and useful trains of thought, and in giving us clearer and more enlarged views of gospel truth and gospel work.

3. Doctrinal harmony is secured by our conference discussions. Such harmony is much needed in these days of latitudinarian views of the doctrines and ordinances of the New Testament. It will never do for the pastor at Bridge-town to promulgate doctrines directly at variance with those which are set forth from the pulpit at Annapolis or Paradise. Not only do our churches suffer loss from such discrepancies, but our denomination and our Master's cause are stultified and embarrassed by all unseemly variances of this kind. If we would have power in convincing and saving men we must have unity in our doctrines, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." To secure this oneness we must not only sit at the feet of Jesus, but sit *together* at his feet, helping each other to comprehend clearly the import of the Master's words. The apostles were exceedingly careful about the unity of their doctrines and practices. When an apparent divergence of opinion became manifest, they assembled themselves together for consultation, and the decision reached, after mature thought, was accepted by the entire body of believers. Our Conference is not, indeed, designed to be an ecclesiastical council. Yet in many respects it is even better, having practically all the advantages of such a council without any of its objectionable features. We can freely compare our views and gain uniformity by reason, where too many ecclesiastical councils have compelled uniformity by arbitrary votes.

4. Consultations in reference to matters of church government and discipline can be conveniently held at such meetings as these. In the discharge of our pastoral duties we are often brought face to face with difficulties the adjustment of which requires more than ordinary wisdom and skill. In such cases the counsel and aid of experienced brethren are much needed. Questions often arise which demand the most careful and judicious consideration. A little timely advice may often aid a pastor in the settlement of difficulties of the gravest character; and, in any case, a pastor feels stronger and more assured in pursuing a particular course, in matters of discipline, when he knows that he has the full concurrence of his brethren in the ministry. The confidential deliberations of our Conference are admirably adapted to exigencies of this kind.

5. These meetings are designed to promote our missionary enterprises, especially that of home evangelization. Many neglected fields might be cared for by us, or their needs so presented to our Home Mission Board as that assistance could be obtained from that source. And, in the matter of raising funds on our respective fields for missionary purposes, much benefit might arise from hearty co-operation among our brethren. Plans could thus be devised and set in operation which would greatly enlarge the contributions of our churches. It is imperatively necessary that such efforts should be put forth. How is it possible that the many destitute fields in this Province shall be adequately supplied with missionaries when some of our wealthiest churches content themselves with mean and paltry contributions scarcely averaging three cents per member? This matter is surely deserving of our most earnest attention, and no agency is better adapted to initiate and carry into operation improved methods than our Missionary Conference.

Having thus considered briefly the utility of such a Society as this, it may not be out of place to make a few suggestions in reference to the best manner of conducting our meetings.

It should be remarked at the outset that punctual attendance at the meet-

ings by pastors and delegates is indispensable to the success of our Conference. Each pastor and delegate should regard it as a matter of duty to his brethren to be promptly in his place and to be properly prepared for the work of each session. If half our brethren allow a spirit of indifference or slothfulness to keep them at home and the other half come unprepared to say or do anything in the way of making the meetings interesting or profitable, we might as well write "Ichabod" over our Conference doors at once, and discontinue all further efforts towards perpetuating an effete and useless institution. But there is no need of resorting to such an alternative. There are enough Baptist ministers and intelligent lay brethren in Annapolis County to sustain a first-class Society of this kind. With our excellent facilities for travelling and the boundless hospitality of the churches who invite us from time to time to meet with them, we have nothing to prevent us from attending and heartily sustaining these meetings.

The interest and utility of our meetings will depend to a very great extent upon the manner in which our business is conducted. A few practical suggestions under this head may not be without value.

1. After the opening and preliminary exercises, brief reports from pastors and delegates in relation to the spiritual prosperity of their respective churches might be submitted. These would not only awaken a deep interest in the meetings, but would also aid materially in directing the current of thought during the session into profitable channels. Such an interchange of religious intelligence would conduce greatly to the promotion of fraternal feelings among the members of the Society, and would lead them all to sympathize more fully with each other in their successes and anxieties.

2. Outlines of sermons should be presented and freely discussed at each meeting. A carefully prepared sermon should occasionally be read and submitted for criticism. Attention should be given to the style of composition, method of arrangement, manner of illustration, and, above all, the soundness of the doctrinal teaching. In this way we might have a sort of "school of prophets" in which each person could be helpful in promoting the homiletical culture of the rest. Such exercises would have a tendency to prevent pastors from falling into common-places of thought and expression.

3. Papers on various topics of general interest should be prepared for each session and read when called for by the brethren. This is one of the most important features of our conference work. Not only is each member benefited by the preparation of such a paper, but all the members are intellectually enriched by being placed in possession of the combined researches of the Society.

Discrimination should be exercised in selecting topics for such papers. Among these, biographical subjects should have a prominent place. Outlines of the lives and labors of such men as Robert Hall, John Foster, William Carey, and Francis Wayland would operate as a healthy stimulus, inciting us to imitate their example and to emulate their excellencies of character. Their methods of work and their peculiarities of style might receive special attention.

Doctrinal papers should not be omitted. Clearer views might in this way be obtained in reference to the fundamental teachings of the scriptures, and useful hints given as to the most effective methods of presenting those teachings to the people. My own conviction is that the popular outcry against "doctrinal sermons" is directed not so much against the *doctrines* we preach as it is against the *manner* in which these doctrines are presented. The good old doctrines of "Divine Sovereignty," "the final perseverance of the Saints," and even "election" may be set forth in such a way as to commend themselves to the favorable opinion of all reasonable persons. On the contrary, they may be presented in such a way as not only to be unintelligible, but as to awaken unnecessary prejudice and court entire rejection. Calvinism, in its moderate and proper form, has few opponents. But the distorted caricatures of Calvinism which are often met with at present excite the contempt of other denominations and awaken angry and needless contentions among our own brethren.

As ministers of the gospel we owe it to our Master and to humanity to study not only *what* to teach, but also *how* to present that teaching to the people.

Historical sketches, giving information relating to the conflicts and growth of the Church of Christ in the world would always be timely and valuable. Sketches of the rise and progress of Baptist principles in this Province, and especially in our own County, would be interesting and useful to each pastor. In studying the history of these churches and the records of the faithful labors and self-sacrificing zeal of the fathers who have passed away we shall receive a mighty impetus in the prosecution of our own pastoral labors.

4. Correspondence should be regularly carried on with our Home Mission Board both with a view to keeping that Board well informed as to the present condition of the mission fields in this County, and also to ascertain from time to time what is the state of the treasury and what progress is being made in home evangelization. Papers should also be read laying before our Society the needs of destitute fields and suggesting plans for obtaining necessary assistance.

But enough has been said to demonstrate the importance of cheerfully sustaining our Ministerial and Missionary Conference, and to indicate the manner in which our meetings may be conducted with the greatest interest and profit. Let us devote our best energies to the maintenance of this useful institution, and both we and our churches will reap an abundant harvest of spiritual enjoyment and prosperity.

For the Christian Messenger.
Indecisiveness.

Dear Editor,—

I am sure that you and the numerous readers of your very excellent paper, so far as they turn their attention to the article under consideration, will agree with me in ascribing much importance to decision of character in the various avocations of life, and in nothing more than in those things which belong to religion. Without it, nothing is effectually done. What is a man without it in relation to any event which calls for action? The farmer stands with his bucket of seed strapped to his side; he looks and hesitates; the clouds, the winds are not quite to his mind he still pauses, and as he pauses he becomes more and more undecided, until at length he decides not to sow.

Now, Mr. Editor, this is by no means an exceptional case, and aptly illustrates the manner in which the all-important subject of religion is treated by a large majority of people, from youth to old age.

The great danger and evil consequences are very easily apprehended. In a multitude of cases, either secular or religious, the subject, whatever it may be, has left the mind impressions no more active in their effort to lead the soul to follow the dictates of reason and interest. There are but few who cannot look back on their past life and see instances in which their own best interests were jeopardized by indecision. While hesitating, the golden opportunity passed, no more to return. So, many feel the effects of indecision in the matter of the soul's salvation. Days, weeks, months, and years, revival after revival, all have come and all have gone, and yet indecision prevails; apparently, the question, "Shall I give up all for Christ?" is as far from being settled affirmatively as ever. To such, surely, we may say, "how long halt ye between two opinions?" The danger lies in the probability that such will be given over. "My spirit shall not always strive with man." Gen. vi. 3.

Indecision is not only dangerous, but it is a terrible sin. It is a very grievous sin against God. It is in defiance of all his love, revealed in Christ. It is a moral suicide—self-murder. No heart can fully conceive its enormity, no tongue can describe it. May not some reader into whose hands this paper shall fall, see his own case sufficiently represented to recognise his own position? Pause my friend. The last days of your life may, if you please, afford you the opportunity of removing that indecision that has as yet been your souls stumbling block, and if continued the cause of its eternal ruin.

YOUR FRIEND IN TRUTH.