

REMOVAL OF THE SOCIETY'S HEADQUARTERS

QUITE keenly do the dear friends of the Allegheny-Pittsburg Church seem to feel the near departure of the Bible House family; yet, philosophically, they have agreed with us that the Lord is abundantly able to care for the interests of his people everywhere, and quite likely he is giving them, in this experience, a special blessing, throwing upon them a greater weight of responsibility in spiritual matters.

On the Wednesday night before Christmas, wholly without our knowledge, they had prepared for a special union meeting in the Bible House Chapel, and requested Brother Russell to come in and say a few words. On his arrival an appointed speaker, in well chosen terms, expressed the love of the Congregation for their Pastor and informed us that, desiring to make a tangible expression of their love, they had selected a fine velvet rug, a fine mahogany desk, a handsome chair, besides a small table and letter-holder. The offering for these gifts had far exceeded the expectations, so that \$138 remained, which they requested should be also used in some manner in connection with the outfitting of Brother Russell's Study in the new Brooklyn home. We accepted these tokens of love with heartfelt appreciation, and told the dear friends that only our conviction that the removal is in the Lord's provision and implies a forward step in his work, would enable us to leave cheerfully the numerous loved ones with whom we had been associated for more than thirty years, as Pastor of the Congregation.

BROTHER RUSSELL RE-ELECTED PASTOR

Two Sundays in advance announcement was made that on the last night of the year 1908 a general meeting would be held, at which the Congregation would expect to elect those who would serve it during the ensuing year. The Bible House Chapel was crowded, though it had been expressly stipulated that only those professing full consecration were invited. A solemn hush was upon the audience while Brother Russell briefly narrated some of the incidents connected with his Pastorate of the Congregation for more than thirty years. He mentioned by name some of those present who had been faithful supporters of the Truth during all of that period. Still larger numbers dated their affiliation with the Truth for twenty, fifteen, ten, five, and then down to one year. He remarked that he had not done for them, either collectively or individually, all that he would have liked to do, but assured them that he had served their interests in every manner to the best of his ability. He further declared that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, he had never done injury to any of them—in deed, in word, or in thought. In vacating the pulpit it caused him great gratification that these things were so. In concluding he requested that, if there were any present who felt that in any sense or degree, at any time or place, he had ever done them injury, in act or word, he hoped they would speak out, that he might know about it, and have opportunity for apology. There being no response to the invitation, he assured them that, not only had he not injured them in word or act, but even in his thoughts they were cherished, loved, yearned for and prayed for.

Before leaving the platform, Brother Russell remarked that Pilgrim Brother Rutherford was present and would doubtless make an excellent Chairman for the business meeting called for the election of the Church's servants for 1909. He said that, unless some objection were made, it would be considered that Brother Rutherford was unanimously approved as Chairman of the session. Silence gives consent, so Brother Rutherford stepped to the platform, Brother Russell stepping down and taking his seat with the friends.

A vote of thanks for the Pastor and Elders who had served during the year was proposed, seconded and passed unanimously. The object of the meeting was stated by the Chairman, and a motion was declared to be in order. Brother Dr. Spill at once arose and proposed that Brother Russell be reelected Pastor of the congregation for the year 1909. He urged that, even though rarely present with the Ecclesia, his election as Pastor would insure to the Church, possibly, a still greater watch care and make him more free to give

advice in its affairs and interests. He declared that many congregations were in the habit of thus electing Brother Russell as Pastor, not only as an expression of their love and confidence, but also as an assurance to [R4313 : page 20] him of their desire for his special oversight of their interests, and with a view to making him feel the more at home with them at any time he could be present. Several brethren seconded the motion. Brother Russell arose, thanked the mover and seconders, but assured the dear friends that they would always have his love, best wishes and assistance everyway irrespective of his election, as suggested. He wished them to understand that he could not hope to be with them frequently in the future. He was glad even that for nearly two years he had addressed them only once a month, or less frequently, because it made the coming separation easier for all concerned. He did not wish anyone to vote on the motion with the thought that it would bring him to Pittsburg often, for he must attend to the interests of the general work. He remarked also that he could not think of accepting such an election, unless it were practically unanimous. The vote was taken and declared to be unanimously carried.

At Brother Russell's suggestion the Bible House family declined to vote at this election, because, not expecting to remain long, it would not be appropriate for them to express a choice. Chairman Rutherford remarked this and then added that, since the local congregation voted unanimously, there could be no objection now to taking another vote which would include the Bible House family, and show their love also for Brother Russell. The motion was put and carried unanimously, the Bible House family voting.

Following the custom of previous years, Brother Russell suggested the names of some who he believed would make faithful servants of the Church—Elders, Deacons and Deaconesses. He remarked that these were mere suggestions, any or all of them subject to rejection. He would not even nominate them, but merely suggested and left the congregation to make its own nominations. Brother Russell's suggestions were nominated and chosen—unanimously elected by the congregation. Altogether the occasion was an enjoyable one. Following the election a prayer, praise and testimony meeting was opened which lasted until after mid-night. Some of the dear friends remarked afterwards on the earnestness and unction of this Watch Night meeting.

=====