

leave the establishment. The Rev. Mr. Guthrie opened the meeting with praise and prayer, after which Dr. Chalmers addressed the meeting. He commenced by explaining what was meant by the local system of philanthropy, as distinguished from a general system. Men are fond of speculating and dilating on a scheme in all its bulk and vastness; but the matter was usually beyond their powers; and that was the reason so many philanthropic schemes fell to pieces. It was so formerly in philosophy.

He then proceeded to explain the nature of the books that were to be used by the collectors. There were two kinds—one for general collections, which he would not discourage, though he believed these would in time settle down to the second class of the local subscription books. These were intended for agents who would take thirty or fifty families contiguous to each other, who would go forth among them, and work them up to the required measure of liberality. The agent must not pass beyond his prescribed bounds, even though he should not get a single subscriber among them; his business was to ply them with information by tracts and otherwise, and so bring them to view the question in a favourable aspect, and to subscribe. He then proceeded to give instances of parishes that had subscribed. If these results were carried over all Scotland, the amount raised would be £150,000.

It was owing to the sacrifices made by the ministers, and the efforts made by the people in the large towns, that the difficulty had been overcome of providing for clergymen in localities where the population could not afford to do what they desired for the sustentation of their ministers. From the general fund all would receive their equal share; and to show how determined the ministers of Edinburgh were to apply all the advantages of their position to the promotion of the general benefit, he would mention—and he trusted his rev. friends would excuse him for doing so—that Dr. Gordon and Mr. Henry Grey had taken smaller houses, and at lower rents, than their present ones; Dr. Cunningham had taken an attic in York place; and Dr. Candlish a flat in Frederick Street; and why had Dr. Gordon done so, when his congregation had raised four thousand five hundred pounds? Because he desired that the benefit should extend to all. A saddler had descended from a £35 house to a flat in Thistle Street at £13, that he might be enabled to aid the “Free Church.”

He would not recapitulate the noble efforts he had formerly mentioned; but he trusted that no delay would take place in carrying out the collections, on the ground that the people needed to be enlightened on the subject, for this would be in fact to say that the best means of enlightening the people should not be used until they had been enlightened. It was the same as if people were to object to

bringing lighted candles into a room because it was too dark to receive them. He considered that the agents would be the most effective torch-bearers that could be devised. There was another objection he anticipated he would be met with, that they were taking money from the poor, and plunging them into pauperism. He denied this altogether, and if he were provoked to it, he would republish a pamphlet he had issued several years ago upon the subject; for he believed that if there was one barrier more effectual than another to ward off the pauperism which now threatened to desolate the land, it would be the accustoming of the working classes to the luxury of giving in support of charity. The difference between the dignity of giving and the degradation of receiving was immense; and if the former habit were once established, it would be difficult to break down. It was strange that many who did not grudge men spending money on snuff or tobacco, or perhaps a little whiskey, should grudge them all participation in the higher luxuries, the intellectual and moral luxury of charity. It seemed to be imagined by some, that because there was a bare impossibility of an equitable adjustment, they should pause in the meantime; but this he argued was the very ground on which they should proceed all the more strenuously. If a disruption took place, then they would find the machinery in operation—they would have a certain fund realised—and be thus really prepared. If a disruption did not take place, then the donations which were generally intended for the erection of churches would not be called for; but they had in their subscriptions the best means of facilitating a settlement. One principal advantage of the associations was, that they would tell at once upon the Government, who, though they did not understand their principles, understood their subscriptions perfectly.

Even if there should be a right adjustment of the question, he would by no means be for letting down this organization. There were thousands of philanthropic objects in Scotland to which their contributions might with great advantage be applied.

He concluded his address, which lasted for upwards of two hours, by throwing upon the higher classes all the responsibility of whatever might ensue from the civil disavowal of the best institute in the land from the national system and the national institutions. Let them take care—he spoke not in a tone of defiance but of warning—let them take care lest having thrown away the means of protecting the country from the flood of pauperism that was setting in, they should find a perilous state of things approaching. A spirit was abroad which, if unchecked by moral means—by those influences which could alone control it—would shake society to its centre.

Mr. Guthrie then pronounced the benediction, after which the meeting separated.