

itself to circumstances and undergoing a variety of changes, passing on from point to point as Providence appeared to direct and the wisdom of experience to dictate. It has not probably yet attained in all respects perfection's height, but in most particulars it affords an admirable example of close approximation to the ideal.

Previous to 1872 its membership, as in so many other societies even at the present day, rested on a purely financial basis. The society up to that time consisted exclusively of life members, made such by the payment of twenty dollars. No others belonged. Twenty-five of these members constituted a quorum for the transaction of business. And at the annual meeting, of such members as might choose to come together in the city of New York on the third Monday of November, there was chosen the full board of managers in whom was vested the entire disposition of the affairs and property of the society. Rather a loose arrangement it would seem. These managers consisted of thirty-two laymen, and, after 1856, of no more than thirty-two ministers, although before that *all* ordained ministers, both traveling and local, who were members of the society were also members of the board. This made it, by the necessities of the case, largely a local affair, and to some extent, legally at least, independent of all church authority. Yet from the first its promoters earnestly endeavored to give it a connectional character, and partly succeeded. They groped their way steadily toward the true theory and method, dropping off one erroneous feature after another, following the leadings of the Lord, and moving forward as fast, perhaps, as the church in general was prepared to accompany them, until they came at length to the fully developed system. It is instructive and interesting to note the advances.

This missionary society was clearly the child of the New York preachers'

meeting. A committee from that meeting, composed of Nathan Bangs, Freeborn Garrettsen and Laban Clark, drew up its constitution, which was formally adopted at a large public gathering held in Forsyth street church, April 5, 1819, and a full set of officers was elected. The ensuing general conference sanctioned the scheme and recommended all other Methodist missionary societies, notably the one at Philadelphia, which was of older date, to become auxiliary to this at New York. But it was more than twenty years before these two societies really united. Nor was it till 1836 that the missionary society became of sufficient importance to have a resident corresponding secretary who should give his entire time to its service. Dr. Nathan Bangs was appointed. He had from the beginning, without salary or compensation of any kind, conducted almost all its business, writing every annual report but one, and holding in himself the most of its life-blood. Dr. Bangs was chosen by the general conference, as have been all subsequent corresponding secretaries, although, until the abolition of the old "society" in 1873, *it* went through the legal form of re-electing them at its regular annual meeting. From 1836 to 1841 the corresponding secretary had to be a member of the New York Conference, which was charged with his supervision.

In 1844 a very important step was taken in the direction of generalizing the management. It was in this year that the church was divided into mission districts, and there was formed from these the general missionary committee, appointed by the bishops, to whom was given a share in the control, conjointly with the board. In 1856 the clerical managers were restricted to thirty-two, and in 1872 was instituted the present arrangement, whereby the general missionary committee is composed of one representative from each of the mission districts,