

Messenger and Visitor

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S. McC. BLACK

Editor.

85 Germain Street, St. John, N. B.

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British Baptists and Their Work.

The latest received issue of the Baptist *Times and Freeman* contains a report in part of the spring assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. The meeting place was Bloomsbury Chapel, London, and the first session was held on the afternoon of Monday, April 28th. The Chapel was crowded in all its parts, and the western sunshine streamed through its windows upon the faces of the congregation. A devotional service, begun by the singing of the hymn—

"Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,"

was led by Dr. Glover. After this service, Dr. Alexander MacLaren who, for the past year has served the Union as its President, introduced his successor, the Rev. J. R. Wood, at the same time offering a few valedictory remarks, thanking his brethren for the honor they had conferred upon him and for the sympathy and assistance which they had given him. A correspondent of *The Times and Freeman* writes: "Dr. MacLaren appeared less conventional than ever. Perhaps scarcely anybody remembered that since the autumn meetings there had been conferred upon him the most coveted University honors. What we did remember was his signal service to the denomination during his year of office."

Following time-honored custom, the new President, in entering upon the duties of his office, delivered an elaborate address. Our English brethren are greatly addicted to delivering and listening to addresses, and while much of their platform work is certainly of a high order, and important questions are thus frequently dealt with in a masterly way, one cannot but think that they overdo the matter, and that if a part of the time devoted to the making and hearing of elaborate speeches were spent in more informal discussion of practical, every day subjects, the results on the whole would be more valuable. President Wood is described as a man of a clear head, a sound judgment, a good heart, a firm hand, and single-minded in the service of his Lord and the denomination. The subject of his address was "The Place of the Minister in the Life of the Church," and the duties and opportunities of the ministerial office were discussed in the light of a lofty ideal.

In accordance of what seems to be an unwritten law of the Union, its vice-president succeeds to the presidency. The vice-president for the present year was selected from the ranks of the laymen, and accordingly Mr. Wood's successor in the presidency will be George White, Esq., M. P. The selection seems to have been received with general favor. Rev. Charles Williams says in the *Times and Freeman*: "I can congratulate . . . the denomination on the acceptance of the office by Mr. White, Sunday-school teacher and deacon for some time, Chairman of the Norwich School Board, Member of the House of Commons, and above all a loyal disciple of Christ, and devoted citizen in the heavenly commonwealth, our vice-president will serve in the high place to which he has been called with equal honor to himself and advantage to the Baptist denomination."

In the present state of opinion and feeling among Baptist and Nonconformists generally in reference to the Government's School Bill, now before Parliament, it was of course a foregone conclusion that the Union would make itself heard upon the subject. A resolution couched in emphatic terms was moved by Mr. George White, M. P., seconded by Dr. Clifford and supported by those gentlemen in

vigorous speeches. The protest against the School Bill was made on the grounds that its effect would be to abolish the present School Boards; to increase confusion and collision between the educational authorities; to lower the standard of national educational efficiency; and to perpetuate, and extend the injustice of the appointment by private managers of teachers of public schools, whose stipends it is proposed to pay entirely out of the public funds. Indignation is expressed at the action of the Government in this matter on the ground especially that the proposed measure amounts to taking advantages of exceptionally favorable political conditions to secure what is considered as virtually a further endowment of the established church, since, if the Bill becomes law, it will mean the indoctrination of the school children of the land in the teachings of the Anglican church and at the expense of the public treasury.

The report made to the Union by Rev. J. H. Shakespeare, Secretary of the Twentieth Century Fund, shows that there has been on the part of British Baptists a noble response to the appeal for funds to carry on the work of the denomination on a broader basis. The sum asked for was £250,000—about \$1,250,000—and Mr. Shakespeare was able to report to the Union that only £9,000 were needed in order to complete the amount. Soon after the announcement was made the deficiency had been reduced by some thousands, and we believe that before the meetings of the Union closed subscriptions had been received sufficient to complete the £250,000. Some of our readers will remember that some ten years ago an effort was made to raise a fund of £100,000 for the work of the Baptist Missionary Society of Great Britain and also to bring up the annual contributions to the Society's work to £100,000. The special fund was raised, but the annual contributions have not yet been brought up to the mark aimed at. Secretary Baynes had to report that for the past year the income of the Society had been nearly £10,000 less than its expenditure. There had, however, been an increase of income as compared with last year of more than £800. A number of generous subscriptions toward the wiping out of the deficit were made on the spot and the prospect appeared good for making up the deficiency in full. Altogether this seems to be a very remarkable showing in reference to the financial side of the denomination's work. It is evident that our English brethren have some money, and it is equally evident that they are disposed to employ their means to high and holy purpose. *The Times and Freeman* in alluding to this devotion of wealth on the part of British Baptists very appropriately says: "We deprecate the least shadow of the notion that the Holy Ghost can be purchased with money. But we anticipate His blessing upon the gifts of sacrifice and consecrated energy, which have been poured into our treasury. We endeavor to value the gold at its proper price and estimate even more highly the grace behind the offering."

Martinique and St. Vincent.

Fuller accounts of the volcanic disaster on the Island of Martinique confirm the reports published last week as to its terrible character. Since the first of the month, and perhaps for a somewhat longer time, the Mont Pelée volcano had shown unwonted signs of activity, and on the 3rd, 4th and 5th of the month, there had been outbursts causing considerable destruction and great alarm in some parts of the island. At noon on May 5th, a stream of burning lava rushed 4,400 feet down the mountain side, following the dry bed of a torrent, and, it is said, reaching the sea five miles from the mountain in three minutes, the fiery flood sweeping away everything in its path over a breadth of about half a mile, and destroying besides much other property the Guerin sugar factory—one of the finest on the Island. It was completely entombed in lava, the tall chimney alone being left visible. One hundred and fifty persons are estimated to have perished there including the owner's son. The following night there was great alarm at St. Pierre caused by terrible detonations and other signs of volcanic action, the city also being shrouded in intense darkness owing to the failure of the electric light. Many of the people it is said rushed out of the city into the hills in their night clothes, mad with terror. A few got away in boats to other islands. On the

sixth and seventh there seems to have been less volcanic activity, though the darkness and constant fall of ashes continued. It was hoped that the worst was over and the Governor endeavored to calm the alarm of the people and persuade them to remain quietly in their homes. It was a little before eight o'clock on Thursday morning, the 8th, that the terrible outburst came, which almost with the sudden swiftness of a flash of lightning enveloped the doomed city in a perfect tempest of fire, bringing death and destruction to all that it contained, its thirty thousand inhabitants—with but a few exceptions it would seem—being strangled with the burning gaseous vapors or burned to death in the awful conflagration which, almost in the twinkling of an eye, seized upon every part of the town. A number of vessels with their crews in the harbor shared the fate of the city. An idea of the sudden and terrific character of the catastrophe may be given from the experience of the British steamer *Roddam*. Captain Whatter reported that having just cast anchor off St. Pierre at 8 a. m. in fine weather, succeeding an awful thunderstorm during the night, he was talking to the ship's agent, Joseph Plissano, who was in a boat alongside, when he saw a tremendous cloud of smoke and cinders rushing with terrific rapidity over the town and port, completely, in an instant, enveloping the former in a sheet of flame and raining fire on board. The agent had just time to climb on board when his boat disappeared. Several of the crew of the *Roddam* were quickly scorched to death. By superhuman efforts, having steam up, the cable was slipped, and the steamer backed away from the shore, and, nine hours later, managed to reach Castries on the Island of St. Lucia. Ten of the *Roddam's* men were lying dead, contorted and burned out of human semblance, among the black cinders which covered the ship's deck to a depth of six inches. Two more of the crew have since died. The Quebec liner, *Roraima*, was also at the time in the harbor. Some of her passengers and crew escaped death, but a much larger number, it would seem, including Captain Muggah of Sydney, C. B., perished in the disaster. From all accounts very few of those who were in St. Pierre at the time of the final outbreak survived. Forty are reported to be in the hospital at Port de France. Parties of French soldiers were set to work at St. Pierre as soon as the subsidence of the heat permitted, cremating the partially burned bodies and doing what they could in the interests of sanitation, but the condition of the place in this respect can be better imagined than described. It is said that there were parts of the city in which the buildings were not burned, but the people were found dead in their houses as if struck by lightning.—Is the small British island of St. Vincent, also, which lies to the south of Martinique, there have been terrible eruptions from La Soufrière volcano. It is reported that on May 10, a stream of stone and mud half a mile wide was issuing from the volcano, and that stones two inches in diameter, fell twelve miles away. Kingstown, the capital, was still practically free from harm, but it was estimated that 2,000 deaths, principally of Carib Indians, had occurred on the Island, seven estates had been burned, domestic animals had been generally killed and the island which had been a tropical paradise had been rendered uninhabitable. Large numbers of people who have been rescued by vessels from the northern parts of Martinique are gathered at Port de France, the capital, and provisions are said to be needed for 100,000 persons. The United States Congress has voted half a million dollars for the relief of the sufferers, and large subscriptions are coming from private sources. King Edward has contributed a thousand pounds, £1,000, and the British Government has offered assistance, but Mr. Balfour in the House of Commons opposed a motion to grant a sum for the relief of the sufferers on the ground that there was no parliamentary precedent for such action.

Editorial Notes.

—It will be seen by a notice from the Moderator and the Secretary of the N. B. Southern Association, that the place for the annual meeting of the Association has not yet been fixed. Doubtless there are some one or more churches which would be glad to entertain the Association, and as the time until the meeting is now very short it is necessary that immediate action be taken. Any church that is willing to entertain the Association is