

congregations, even in the coldest morning of the winter months, present a cheerless, diminished, and heartless aspect, if every member of our societies were fully alive to the inexpressible privilege of drawing near to the Almighty's seat, and ordering his cause before him. Seldom would the word preached fail of having signs following, if the Minister's heart and hands were upheld by a believing multitude around him, who, like himself, were longing for the coming of Christ's kingdom, and whose love for spiritual food and for his earthly abode, most fully overcame all sensual tendencies to stay at home and prepare a delicate table.

The poor, in times of distress, often yield to a temptation to absent themselves from their accustomed place in the house of God; because a want of suitable clothing leaves a meanness in their appearance, which is chiefly conspicuous by its being contrasted with that of the more favored of their brethren. The poor who are among you, we affectionately exhort to resist this temptation; and the more, because, from our personal intercourse with you, we know it to be an evil which is widely spread.

To attend God's house under any circumstances with at least cleanly persons, is a paramount duty; to attend with comfortable and neat clothing, is a sacred propriety; but if it should please God that, through straitened circumstances, our garments are coarser than those of our brethren, and that they are worn by age, we are not thereby absolved from the general duty. Give, therefore, this additional proof of poverty of spirit, and of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Go to the sanctuary, as long as you are clothed at all, with such garments as you have, though they may be inferior to those of others; as in the case of the "poor man with vile raiment," to which the Apostle James directs attention. (Chap. ii, 2)—Let it be true of all our congregations, that there "the rich and the poor meet together," the Lord being the Maker of them all.—Such humble souls shall be exalted. In this way, not only is spiritual loss and danger averted, but another great evil is prevented,—the evil of having our poorer brethren kept out of sight and out of mind.—Let the more favoured and the rich in our congregations have the objects of their Christian sympathy brought before them, by beholding them worshipping in the same house of prayer, and they are more likely to extend to them the hand and aid of Christian benevolence. In connection with this subject, too, we earnestly exhort our poorer brethren never to deprive themselves of the privilege of meeting in class, in those seasons when extreme privation shall render them unable to present their accustomed contribution; nor to deprive themselves, for similar reasons, of any spiritual privilege whatever. Strongly as we assert the duty of every man to support those institutions of the Gospel which have been dearer to him than life, we assert, with equal emphasis, that we "desire not yours but you." When external poverty is your lot, then let poverty of spirit be joined with it, and yours will indeed be "the kingdom of heaven." You will have support in the day of trial, and in God's good time deliverance from it.

In the present season of commercial embarrassment and national distress, when infidels and irreligious men are charging all the sufferings of the community upon the selfish policy of rulers, and upon existing institutions said to be ill-constructed; when the doctrine of a remedial and judicial Providence is scorned, and a general attempt is made to put God far off from the affairs of this world, we entreat you, brethren, to own His hand in all the afflictions you see around you, setting thereby an example to others, that they may do the same, and confessing that sorrow is the result of sin.—"When he giveth quietness, who then can give trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him, whether it be done to a nation or to a man only?" Surrounded by fearful evidences of national ungodliness and unfaithfulness, imitate the devout conduct of the first Methodists, and go in crowds, on the appointed Quarterly Fast-Days, to the meetings for special intercession; and there fervently plead in the spirit of Moses and Elijah, that God may be merciful to this land, that he may avert his fierce wrath from our nation, and that he may pour out his spirit upon our drooping churches. Indeed, this love of

prayer, and the love of all ordinances, sacramental or otherwise, will always proceed from a believing and reverent waiting upon God in public, and feeding upon the manna of his word.

There is one subject of great public moment, to which we direct your most serious attention. Much has lately been said in Parliament and elsewhere on bribery at elections. We do not refer to the practice as supposing that any of you can have allowed yourselves to fall into what is so obviously a fearful evil, but as earnestly desiring that your example and influence may be employed in aid of the measures which seek to extinguish it altogether.—Nor are we—in thus calling on you to maintain a holy opposition to a practice which could not become general but in consequence of previously existing and widely spread moral corruption—without support from the conduct and writings of Mr. Wesley. So early as July, 1747, we find him in his Journal expressing his evidently great pleasure, that the Methodists of Cornwall were steadily refusing to receive bribes for their votes. He was so deeply impressed with the heinous character of the offence, that he wrote the Tract, "A Word to a Freeholder," for distribution at elections; in which he uses, in his own laconic manner, these forcible expressions:—"Will you sell your country? Will you sell your own soul? your Saviour? Nay, God forbid! Rather cast down just now the thirty pieces of silver or gold, and say, 'Sir, I will not sell heaven: neither you nor all the world is able to pay the purchase.'" And, not content with this, seeking to influence the public, he required all his preachers to aid him in his opposition. In the sixth paragraph of the answer to Question XXI. of what are commonly called "The Largo Minutes," he says, "Extirpate bribery; receiving any thing directly or indirectly for voting in any election. Show no respect of persons herein, but expel all that touch the accursed thing. Largely show, both in public and private, the wickedness of thus selling our country. And everywhere read the 'Word to a Freeholder, and disperse it with both hands.'" We call your earnest attention to these quotations from Mr. Wesley, which are so correct in sentiment, as they are forcible in expression. Not only cherish the conviction yourselves, but endeavour to implant it in others, that bribery is a moral evil, to be avoided for conscience sake, as well as from a fear of the law. We trust that it is not necessary to address you either more strongly on this subject. We will, therefore, only repeat the "advice" which Mr. Wesley records himself (Journal, Oct. 6th, 1774) to have given the members of the society, in prospect of an election. "I met," he says, "those of our society who had votes in the ensuing election, and advised them, 1st. To vote, without ice or reward, for the person they judged most worthy. 2d. To speak no evil of the person they voted against. 3d. To take care their spirits were not sharpened against those who voted on the other side."

Let not the youthful members of our congregations forget to "give attendance to reading." Let them seek that enlargement and sanctification of intellect, which, in connection with grace, proceeds from searching out the deep harmonies which subsist between those evangelical truths in which they have been instructed, and the whole scope and spirit of the written word. Let them willingly form themselves into classes, or companies, under the guidance and at the call of their Ministers; in order that they may the more successfully prosecute these delightful studies. Nor will the intellect alone reap the advantage. The whole soul will be sanctified through the truth. Piety and humanity will be deeper, the church will be better served, a richer offering will be laid on God's altar, and, instead of the transient excitement which is often produced by the sympathies of others,—a spark which, when breathed on, has only just time to glow and die,—there will be the steady and unflinching excitement which flows from holy principle,—a flame which is as ardent as it is luminous and clear.

We exhort all of you, beloved brethren, in your various stations of duty, to use your utmost efforts and influence to extend the Gospel of Christ, and thus evince yourselves his witnesses. It is with us a speakable thankfulness to God that we recognise

the fact, that, in the last year of fearful suffering and depression, our enlarged Missionary operations should have been supported by the noble sum of upwards of £101,000, and that, in the last few months, two-thirds of the previously existing debt of £30,000 should have been discharged by efforts of special liberality. Surely this is no doubtful token that "the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." In behalf of this great cause, we solicit your steady and unwearied efforts. Human appliances have been directed to healing the disorders of human society in vain; and nothing can save a wretched, wrecked, and perishing world, but the dissemination of the Gospel. Go to your various Missionary meetings as to means of grace. Despise that low and vulgar, as well as sickly and depraved taste, which craves to be amused, whether with the sparks of wit, or with the merely facetious anecdote. Combine to aid us in promoting a better, a more healthy and spiritual taste. Aim at enlarged and clear views of the moral grandeur of the cause, and of its claims upon every Christian's heart. Seek to have the cause luminously presented to your understanding, and then allow it to exert its full power upon your affections. There is something inexpressibly more sublime and affecting in the simple greatness and practical character of the Missionary scheme, considered in itself, and as it really is, than in any illustrative or rhetorical adornment that may be thrown around it in a disquisition.

Endeavour, likewise, to promote the efficiency of your respective Sabbath-schools as well as the week-day institutions, for the instruction in Methodist doctrine of the children of our people of the working classes. You are casting bread upon the waters which shall be found after many days. In endeavouring to extend the kingdom of Christ, in that diligent and self-denying manner which the Gospel requires, it will be absolutely necessary for us to avoid all useless, lavish, and luxurious expenditure. Absolutely bound as Christians are at all times to deny themselves of superfluities in order that they may have wherewith to give to the poor, and to the varied institutions of the Gospel, it is still more their duty to do this at a time when luxurious ease and voluptuousness are crying national sins. In this day we are required to study and imitate the sterner virtues of the regenerate character. It is by such men as Samuel, Elijah, John the Baptist, Martin Luther, and John Wesley, that the destinies of the church are affected in momentous and troubled times, not by those who are wedded to elegant dwellings, costly furniture, and delicate tables. Suffer us, therefore, in the spirit of affection and sacred jealousy, to exhort those of you who are favoured with this world's good, to rise above pleasing and dangerous indulgences, whether ministering to the eye or to the sensual taste, and to set your affections on the things that are above. In this way, you will be not only disenthralled from the bondage of sense, which itself is a great spiritual privilege, but rendered increasingly able, by influence and contribution, to serve the Redeemer's cause. Of many of our people we may say with much confidence "how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality; for to their power we bear them record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves;" and even among the families of our people who are in a state of competence and comparative affluence, we greatly rejoice in the instances of sanctified benevolence which the last year has afforded.

It is matter, likewise, of devout thankfulness, that, although other churches around us are excited and agitated with controversy, our own is blessed with general union and peace. Let us improve this to the attainment of greater prosperity. Having no serious questions of doctrine and discipline to settle, let us give ourselves to our great work of acquiring vital holiness, and then spreading it through the land.

Our ecclesiastical situation, peculiar as it may seem to be, especially to the advocates of extreme opinions on either hand, we have always regarded as providential; and the more closely we consider it, the more strongly are we persuaded that we are very favourably situated for promoting that catholic union of all believers, which, according to his own words, is a prerequisite

to the conversion of the world. Of this vantage-ground let us make the most use, disregarding the rebukes and scorn of men who assume the absolute and unquestionable truth of their own principles, and who unhesitatingly condemn the least departure from them. Let us endeavour, at the same time, by loyalty and good order, to serve the temporal interests of society, and thus in both respects to make good our claim to the designation which we derive from our Founder's name. We greatly rejoice in the fact that, on several late important occasions, evangelical clergymen of the church of Scotland have supplied our pulpits. Amid abounding instances of intolerance and bigotry, it is truly delightful to witness this kindly spirit of mutual recognition, and catholic expansiveness of heart. We hail these instances as precursors of the evangelical union of the members to Christ's mystic body, which shall one day deprive both Popery and infidelity of their vaunted arguments.

We have gone through the usual solemnities of our annual Conference: we have made the accustomed mournful record of departed brethren, some of whom were eminently "burning and shining lights," in whose light it has been our lot for a while to rejoice. Now, however, they are extinguished in death, but only to be rekindled where they "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever." Nearly all those Ministers that laboured in the days of Mr Wesley are gone, and the second century of our existence is proceeding under different circumstances, and with a new race of Ministers and agents. Thus do we all fill our appointed sphere, and then pass away; and happy is he who shall be rewarded and accepted "at the end of the days."

A number of young and hopeful Ministers, after completing their probation, have been ordained to the same work and office; while others have been admitted on trial as Candidates. We commend the whole to your prayerful and affectionate recognition.

According to our peculiar usages, none are reported in the documents of the Connection as being members of the society, but those who regularly meet in class; and we regret to state, that, in making up the annual statistical account, we find a decrease in the numbers of the home connection of two thousand and sixty-five; though there is an increase in the foreign department of four thousand and eighty-one; and also of three hundred and sixty-two in Ireland; making a total, in the societies under the British Conference, of two thousand three hundred and seventy-eight. At the same time it ought to be remarked, that, as nearly twenty thousand persons on trial are reported in the same documents, it is very likely that, had the returns been taken from the June, instead of the March quarter, we should have found an increase. And we rejoice to say that the Methodist Episcopal Church of North America has realized an increase of upwards of seventy thousand. The decrease in Great Britain is, in part accounted for by the prevailing distress, which has led many to emigrate, and others for the present to neglect meeting in class; we would, nevertheless, humble ourselves before God, and deplore our own unfaithfulness, and use this fact as an additional incentive to plead with Him for a more copious effusion of His Holy Spirit, that the number of conversions may not only be sufficient to fill up all vacancies but to swell the ranks of the church with a great increase. Still, however, let us be thankful for a discipline which preserves purity, even should the price be partly a diminution of numbers. Purity and holiness attained, eventual increase is certain. While the present distressing stagnation of trade continues, let our suffering people confide in the wisdom and goodness of God, and make known all their wants unto him by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Let them not be led into any rash or violent course of conduct by the representations of interested and turbulent partisans, and thereby engage in schemes which would lead to the wreck of all piety; but rather act in accordance with the belief, that "the very hairs of our head are all numbered," and that, when God has tried them, they shall come forth as gold purified.

And now we separate to depart to our several spheres of duty. With an utter sense of human feebleness, we cast ourselves upon omnipotent grace, and upon your affec-