

\* Recording-Secretary—T. A. Gibson, Esq.

\* Corresponding-Sec'y—John Campbell, Esq.

\* Committee of Management—Messrs. Wm. Edmondstone, J. M. Ross, George Templeton, Wm. McNider, David Shaw, E. McLennan, James Goudie, J. S. Hunter, John Kingan, Wm. Ross, Wm. Maxwell, John McPherson, and Archibald Ferguson.

\* Chaplains—Rev. Alex. Mathieson, D. D. and Rev. Wm. Snodgrass.

The last resolution was moved by Mr. KINGAN, seconded by Mr. STEPHENS:

"That the best thanks of the Association be tendered to the Hon. Peter McGill, for his faithful services as President since the formation of the Association in 1845, and to the office-bearers for their services during the past year."

The proceedings of the evening being concluded, the benediction was pronounced by the Rev. Mr. Snodgrass.

### MISCELLANEOUS.

#### Wellington Industrial Nursery, Bedford Road, Clapham.

MR DEAR———,—Allow me to give you a short account of a very noble countryman of ours and of the good work to which he has devoted himself. I know you will be interested in it for its own sake, and perhaps you may be able to render it some practical help. The man is Mr. Andrew Walker, the work is an Industrial Nursery Garden at Clapham, carried on by him for the reformation of London thieves. More than a year ago I visited Mr. Walker at his institution, and the account I now give you of his past history and present undertaking was partly received there from his own lips, partly obtained from others who have long known him. Mr. Walker is a native of the village of Earlsdon, on Leader Water, and was brought up to the trade of a gardener. In this capacity he went, in the employment of some lady or gentleman, to the neighbourhood of London. One day, while he was in town, he happened to lose his way among the lanes and alleys near Westminster Abbey, and during his wanderings in this district was deeply impressed with the degradation of soul and body into which its inhabitants seemed sunk. The impression of what he had seen lay for days on his spirit, a weight which he could not put by. He thought within himself, Is this great evil a necessity? Are there no human means by which it can be reached? At last, hearing of the City Mission, and of the good it was doing among the London population, he, after a time, made up his mind to offer himself to this Society as one of its missionaries. He did so, and was accepted, and appointed to labour in this same district, the misery of which had so much impressed him. His work lay in the lowest parts of Westminster, and among the most noted haunts and dens of thieves, places where no stranger decently dressed, could approach with safety. But Mr. Walker, by his perseverance, energy, strong sense and Christian courage and devotion, in time

won such influence in the district as to become free even of the haunts of the thieves. He could enter them at any hour, and was respected even by the hardest and most abandoned, and so reached the hearts of many as to make them long to lay aside their evil work, and return to honest ways. He told me some interesting anecdotes, illustrative of the life of these thieves, and of his way with them; but these I cannot venture to repeat, as the details have become dim in my memory. He told me that one practical question often put to him by them was, 'If we take your advice, and abandon our dishonest trade at once, what are we to do for a livelihood? We would willingly do so if you could answer this question for us. We must steal this forenoon if we are to eat this evening!' He could not deny the pertinency of the question, and set about finding for it a practical answer. This was found in the shape of an asylum, in which they were given food and shelter in return for work done and thus by Mr. Walker's years of toil was the way paved, the foundations laid, for that Westminster Reformatory, of which, in other hands, so much has since been heard. It was however, I have been informed, out of his labours and suggestions that the whole design and execution originally sprang. Here, as in so many other instances, he laboured, and other men entered into his labours. During seventeen years of toil and self-denial in this field, he went from house to house, and was made a great blessing to the poor and sinful in Westminster. He established schools for many hundred children, and his work was rewarded in many instances, such as it would take pages to relate. Many owe to him all their hopes for this world and that to come. Partly from over work, partly from domestic distress, his health at last began to fail, and he was compelled to resign his connection with the London City Mission in Westminster. He then removed to the Reformatory, but there the committee introduced regulations and rules which Mr. Walker considered inconsistent with Scripture and reason. He therefore left it, as he could not conduct it according to his conscience because of the penal rules there enforced. He, however, resolved to go on with the good work he had begun, and to turn his experience to account in an institution of his own forming. For this purpose he took a Nursery Garden near Clapham for the rearing of plants, and thither he invited those who had fallen into the practice of thieving but who desired to forsake their evil life, to come and take refuge. He was enabled to set up this establishment chiefly by a loan of £600 advanced to him by a person friendly to his undertaking. It is called the "Wellington Industrial Nursery," and when I visited it and Mr. Walker, I found him to be a man of no common calibre in body and mind, a thorough Scot, and all this ennobled and sanctified by the purest Christian aims. He told me that his new institution was well-known by those whom he had formerly laboured amongst. Whenever any one wished to leave his old

life, he came out to Mr. Walker and offered to become a labourer for a time in his Nursery. He at once welcomed him if he had room, telling him the rules of the place, which are these:—Work from 6 to 8, then prayers and breakfast. Work again from 9 till 12 or 1, then an hour to dinner; work again till 6; at 6 all return to the house, wash and make clean, sup, and after supper spend the time in reading, &c., till 9, when again prayers, and all retire to rest. The reading I speak of after supper consisted partly of religious instruction, but not wholly. Anything that Mr. Walker thought would interest, instruct, and elevate them was employed in these evenings. The one controlling influence seemed to be his continued presence with and near them in personal intercourse, his living with them in the same small house and in the same way as they did, he had with him a younger brother who lived as he did, and helped him. Mr. Walker has but one punishment. If any of his inmates are unruly or disobedient, he takes from them half of the next meal or sometimes a whole meal. This, along with all the above regulations, he tells them before entering and if they are willing to submit he receives them. He told me that he found the employment of delving and working among flowers healthful as well to their minds as to their bodies. It drew them away from their old thoughts and associates, and opened up to them, perhaps for the first time in their lives, simple and innocent interests. As they worked in the nursery ground, he guarded as well as he could against their congregating in knots, and talking over their old haunts and associates. When he overheard them laughing and joking about any of their practices or comrades, he would say to them, "Don't let us bring Horsemonger Lane out here. Let us dig a grave to bury the past in, and begin a new life here." He contrived, as often as possible, to work with them by one among the flowerbeds or in the glass-houses, and then by conversation to get to know their character and instil some good thoughts into them. I asked whether, on their first coming he tried to stir in them any thing like repentance and sorrow for their past lives. He answered that his first endeavour was to get them not to dwell on but to forget the past, and to feel that they had come there to make a new start in life. Many changed their habits and became honest men, who did not apparently pass through any deep religious changes.

Some instances however he mentioned in which the outward change was followed by an inward repentance and awakening. But this was not the case in all.

The material result of their labours is many thousand pots of flowers reared yearly, for which he finds a ready sale in Covent Garden Market. The money thus realized he expects will in time when all debt has been cleared off, amply support the present institution, and enable him to enlarge it. The moral result is, that after the men have stayed with him long enough to convince