

## Religious and Missionary Intelligence.

### WESLEYAN CONFERENCE, 1841.

#### MISSIONARY COMMITTEE.

The Preachers and other Gentlemen, invited to attend the Special Meeting of the Missionary Committee, with a number of leading country friends, and several official members of the different Auxiliary and Branch Societies, assembled in the Chapel, Oldham-street, on the forenoon of yesterday (Tuesday) week;—the Rev. ROBERT NEWTON, President for the last year, in the chair.

After the usual devotional exercises, the General Minutes of the Committee of Management were read by the Rev. E. HOULBELL, and the proceedings of the Finance Committee, by the Rev. JOHN BEECHAM. The details were highly interesting and satisfactory,—affording decisive evidences of the growing prosperity of the work. In the financial department, great watchfulness appeared to have been exercised; many economical suggestions were thrown out, and, in all cases of extraordinary outlay, distinct explanations, or refunding, had been required.

The Committee appointed to manage the affairs of the Polynesian Missionary Ship also made a report, from which it appeared, that the usefulness and comfort of the Missionaries and their families had been greatly promoted by the instrumentality of this vessel. According to a statement of Mr. Waterhouse, the passages and carriage of goods, effected by its means, in five months of the last year, would have cost £700;—and, independently of a great saving in this respect, its employment had been attended with other advantages, and had fully realized the expectations of the Committee.

Some inquiries having been made and answered in the reference to the preceding reports,

Dr. BUNTING observed, that there was so much confidence, he believed, in the integrity and diligence of the different Committees, as to render the examination of details very unnecessary. They had met that day under circumstances which rendered individual matters of comparative unimportance. The question was, whether they were to go on, on the present scale, or not? He begged permission to read an extract from the report presented to the Annual Meeting in May last, relating to the financial state and prospects of the Society at large, and which ought to form the basis of their deliberations that morning. He did not see that they could go a step further,—but it would be their duty to abridge their establishment, and, (however reluctant) to recall some of their Missionaries,—unless they had a reasonable prospect and a well-grounded assurance of increased support. The Doctor then read nearly the first ten pages of the Missionary Report, just published, of which the following is the substance:—

"The Extract commenced by stating, that the Committee met the Society, on that occasion, under circumstances so peculiar, that they should deviate from the order of topics usually observed, by explaining the financial condition and prospects of the Institution before they entered upon the details of missionary operations. In the Annual Reports for several years it had been distinctly intimated that the Society could not adequately and efficiently maintain its numerous and important Foreign Missions, without a large augmentation of its regular income. In closing the financial statement for 1839, the Committee announced a debt of £20,871, and that the Society must either greatly reduce its missionary establishments, and abandon some portion of the field already nobly won and occupied, or there must be an addition of 10 or £12,000 a year to support its existing establishments:—it was also then stated, that for the gradual extinction of the debt and the enlargement of the Society's labours, an addition of not less than £20,000 a year would be required. The accuracy of these views had been confirmed by another year's experience; and the Committee had refrained almost entirely from embarking in any new undertaking, although pressing applications were made for nearly sixty additional missionaries, and although a larger number than before of Missionary Candidates were anxiously waiting to be employed. The only exception had been the new Mission of the

Gold Coast and to Ashantee:—nor would they have met even that loud call upon their humanity and piety, if the means of obeying it had not been specially provided. They had also sedulously endeavoured to abridge the demand on the General Fund by various suggestions to the Missionary districts abroad, and by inducing foreign congregations to make greater exertions for maintaining the work among themselves; the consequence had been, that in the four West Indian districts of Antigua, St. Vincent's, Demarara, and Jamaica, there had been a decrease of expenditure to the amount of £6,584. In other districts, however, this mode of relieving the General Fund was impracticable, and the expenditure had been largely increased, especially on stations almost wholly heathen. Such a result was not wholly unanticipated. The blessing vouchsafed in answer to prayer would create, from time to time, additional demands; and they must cease to pray, or learn to give on a scale of corresponding generosity. The Committee did not undertake the plans of beneficence which had involved them, rashly, or without sanction; they were continually stimulated and urged onward, not merely by the pleadings of applicants for spiritual help, but by the zealous and consentaneous exhortations and acclamations which met them from every quarter. The Report then took a review of the financial position of the Society, up to December 31, 1840, under the items of Income and Expenditure. As to the former, it appeared, that in the regular contributions from the Auxiliary and Branch Societies of Great Britain and Ireland there was an increase of £1,224, over and above the Ashantee Fund of £5,037. The amount received at the Mission House was less by £750 this year than last, but the last year included one donation of £1,500. The net home increase was only £167. There was a decrease in the Foreign Stations of £3,190, but this arose, very materially, from a new arrangement respecting local contributions for chapels which were not now, as heretofore, brought into the general account. In legacies, there had been a decrease of £1,746. The gross income of 1840 was, in round numbers, £90,182;—the gross expenditure £109,226;—excess of expenditure over income £19,044;—to which adding the debt of 1838 and 1839, (£20,871), the actual deficiency to December 31, would be £42,939. From this amount, however, should be deducted loans to foreign chapels, and balances unpaid in December, estimated together at £12,322,—making the real debt up to that time £30,616. The Committee suggested that some united and determined effort must be made, at a proper period, in order to extinguish this debt, and requested the meeting to authorize them to deliberate and decide upon the best time and plan for originating such an effort at home and abroad. In the meantime, till the payment of the debt could be systematically attempted, their object should be to prevent any further accumulation, by resolute exertions to make the current year's income adequate to its anticipated and unavoidable expenditure. To this point, during the remainder of the present year, let their energies be directed. Let no Branch Society, or individual members, confine their energies to such an increase of contribution as they might deem, on merely arithmetical principles, their own insulated and precise average share of the sum to be raised,—such a principle would be as fallacious in future as it had proved, wherever adopted, in times past;—but let all and each, in city, town, and village, do, not what others do, or ought to do, but their utmost and their best,—measuring their liberality by their own obligations and means, and by the urgent and paramount necessities of the case. The Committee then recommended an increase of organized and well-worked Auxiliary and Branch Societies;—that a greater number of collectors should be engaged;—that members of local committees and other friends should act as collectors, at least occasionally, in their private circles; and that special and general efforts should be used to increase the income from annual subscriptions to an amount somewhat worthy of the cause. In conclusion, the Report adverted to the noble gift of the Mission House and Premises to the Society by the Centenary Committee, without any charge whatever, either for the site, the necessary alterations, or the new buildings.

The Rev. Doctor then proceeded to notice the favourable indications which encouraged the committee. The first was, that the blessing of God still attended the

Missions. If numbers were any index of prosperity, there had been an increase in numbers this year of 5,700. (Hear.) This fact proved that their Missions were not out of favour with the great Head of the Church,—that the money had been well expended,—and that the debt had been incurred in the prosecution of objects infinitely more important, as eternity would show, than those which generally engaged the attention of mankind. Then as to their income, there was nothing very discouraging;—there was no appearance of declension or good will to the cause;—if some had fallen short, others had increased;—and there had been, altogether, no more fluctuation or diversity than was to be expected. The Society, it might be inferred, then, had not lost favour with God or man. By a reflex operation, it had conferred great benefits on the connexion at large, which, for its standing in public estimation, was indebted, (he would say it humbly, and make no boast of it,) to the character, extent, and usefulness of its Missions, whereby many friends had been made, who could not have been made in any other way. There were, however, some grounds for gloom and depression. He was not much discouraged about the debt;—at a proper time, and by a simultaneous effort, that might be managed;—it would be folly to pretend, after raising a sum approaching to £200,000, that, as a people, they could not get over the debt, if their opulent friends acted upon the principles they professed to believe, and as good stewards of the manifold gifts of God: but, in reference to what was regular and annual, their main dependence must be, not upon opulent friends, but upon the bulk of the people doing their duty. Upon exigencies, they might look to wealthy friends for large contributions; but it was disheartening and discouraging to consider, that the expenditure was so regularly and constantly exceeding the present income. Noble efforts were made in individual cases; but he feared the Society was not making a general progress in annual income; and this was the great difficulty. Unless this could be done, it would be of comparatively little use to clear off the incumbrances. The main point to be ascertained was, whether they could, or could not, increase the income by £20,000 a-year. (Hear, hear.) If they could not do that, they must bring their establishment down ("No, no.") to their probable income. That could only be done by stopping the machine,—giving up some of their stations, and recalling the missionaries. ("No, no.") It would not be sufficient to get a few pounds more at annual meetings; what the Society wanted was regular annual subscriptions. (Hear.) It could not depend on casualties.

The President having invited remarks on the best mode of increasing the finances, The Rev. Mr. ENTWISLE thought it desirable to carry out, as far as possible, the plan of monthly and quarterly subscriptions. There was much to be done, but they could do it, on the one-and-all system.

The Rev. Mr. FOWLER inquired if something could not be saved in the expense of collecting, and of missionary deputations?

The Rev. E. GRINDROP hoped the question would be taken up by local committees. The thing to be aimed at, he thought, was to produce an increased degree of benevolence throughout the connexion at large, and he hoped a movement in advance would be made immediately.

The Rev. P. McOWAN said, it was not speechifying but increased liberality which was needed, and he announced an addition to his own subscription, as well as a handsome contribution towards reducing the debt.

The Rev. W. VEVERS and J. IRVING, Esq., of Bristol, threw out some practical suggestions, and expressed their readiness to assist in liquidating the debt, and carrying on the work.

The President put it to the meeting, whether this was the time to make some special and general effort, or whether, considering the state of the country, they should make an effort, to be continuous, to bring up the income to the expenditure.

The Rev. W. HORTON deprecated the withdrawal of missionaries. He had been led to inquire in what way he could do more for the cause, and had determined that each of his children should henceforth appear as annual subscribers in the report,—hoping that, when they became able, they would feel bound, not only by general obligation, but also by feelings of filial regard, to continue, or increase the subscriptions.

If that principle were generally acted upon, a large augmentation in the regular annual income would soon be experienced.

Several gentlemen, including Messrs. T. CROOK and ROBINSON KAYE, with the Rev. Messrs. SCOTT, TABRAHAM, and EASTWOOD, spoke on the question.

Dr. BUNTING thought, they should keep the liquidation of the debt, and the raising such an annual income as experience proved to be essential, quite distinct; and that, at present, their attention should be chiefly directed to the latter object.

The Rev. JOHN SCOTT suggested, that an attempt should be made to excite a general missionary feeling throughout the connexion. He recommended that the secretaries, accompanied by influential laymen, should visit some of the larger societies, and that the auxiliary and branch committees should be met, in order to produce an impression of the necessity of increased exertion. In many circuits, missionary organization was imperfect,—many persons in our congregations had never been asked systematically to subscribe,—and many members of the society only gave at collections. If all the means of promoting the cause were examined and employed in every locality, there would be no occasion for alarm or apprehension.

Mr. CROOK supported Mr. Scott's suggestions.

Dr. BUNTING urged the duty and necessity of making personal sacrifices for the promotion of this noble cause, and expressed a willingness to take his share in the proposed visitation of the circuits. (Hear.) He thought the work had been too much left to young persons and ladies;—not that he undervalued, but honoured them;—still, gentlemen should not devolve the work upon them entirely, but should use their personal influence on its behalf. He called on the preachers to go round themselves, and not to leave all to the laymen. They must also give up boasting, take a humble position, and look well to the practical details of the system.

The Rev. Messrs. S. WADDY, HOULBELL, BELL, BEECHAM, and HADDEN, with Mr. FARMER, and other gentlemen, took part in a discussion which ensued.

JAMES WOOD, Esq., of Manchester, then moved, and the Rev. G. MARSDEN seconded, a resolution to be presented to the Conference, on the necessity of a general effort to augment the annual income of the Society,—recommending a visitation by the secretaries of some of the larger societies,—and inviting the resident officers and preachers of the circuits to co-operate with them. The motion was carried unanimously.

Dr. BUNTING adverted to the handsome amount (£300) raised by the Proprietary School at Sheffield, and held it out as an example to the other Methodist Schools in the kingdom.

Thanks were voted to the Treasurers,—Messrs. FARMER and SCOTT; and also to the Secretaries,—Dr. BUNTING, Mr. BEECHAM, Dr. ALDER, and Mr. HOULBELL; after which the proceedings closed.

#### THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION.

The Committee of the Theological Institution met in the same chapel, on the evening of the same day,—the President in the chair.

The Rev. E. GRINDROP, one of the secretaries, read the report, from which it appeared, that at the commencement of the year there were 60 students receiving the benefit of the institution, of whom 44 were intended for the home work, 10 for foreign missions, 4 were selected by the Irish conference, and two were to be employed in the Welsh language: 30 were at Hoxton, 25 at Abney House, and 5 in private residence. The committee were happy to report an improved state of health in both establishments. As to the religious character and mental improvement of the students, the most satisfactory evidence was afforded by the statements of the governors, tutors, and examiners, which were read.—The Report then adverted to the purchase of commodious premises, on Richmond Hill, for a Southern Institution, which, with some appropriate furniture, had been obtained on very advantageous terms (we believe for £7500) chiefly through the instrumentality of Mr. Farmer. Architects were expected shortly to furnish plans and designs for the adaptation of those premises, which, it was intended, should be in readiness for occupation by September, 1842, when both institutions would be opened. With reference to the