

WESLEYAN LITERATURE.

The Wesleyan Conference; its Duties and Responsibilities; with a Vindication of its Recent Acts of Discipline. By THOMAS JACKSON, President of the Conference, MDCCCXIX. London: J. Mason. 8vo., pp. 68.

Extracts.

THE "FLY SHEETS," THEIR CHARACTER AND EFFECTS.

Within the last three or four years the peace of the Wesleyan Connexion has been seriously interrupted by the publication of a series of malicious and libellous pamphlets, which have been extensively circulated, by post and otherwise, for the purpose of correcting various alleged abuses, both in the Conference and several of its institutions. These pamphlets are all strictly anonymous, containing no author's name, and the name of no printer, but professing to be the joint production of a Corresponding Committee, the members of which were said to be resident in some of the principal towns of England and North Britain. They contain direct and repeated attacks upon some of the most gifted, useful, laborious, and esteemed Ministers of the body, representing them as indolent, proud, selfish, ambitious, and morally dishonest; especially the men whom the Conference has entrusted with the management of its important and widely extended Missions. The writers represent the members of the Conference generally, as mean and spiritless, not daring to think and act for themselves, but consenting to be blindly led by a few ambitious individuals, who are intent upon managing everything for the gratification of their own selfishness, caprice, and vanity. These nameless authors profess to relate private and confidential conversations, to disclose the secrets of domestic life; and they even assail with strong but unrighteous censures the memory of the pious dead.

Those things are dwelt upon by the writers, not in a tone of sorrow and regret, that evils of such magnitude should exist among religious people, so as to dishonour Christ, to neutralize the effect of his truth and ordinances, and to retard his work of mercy in the world. They are rather dwelt upon in a tone of scorn and of bitter malignity, bearing, indeed, a character of personal hatred and vindictiveness; and in various instances the writers manifest a fearful disregard of truth. For a time it was hoped that the spirit of these writers would defeat their object, especially among religious people, whose sanctified nature instinctively abhors that which is evil; so that these vehicles of slander and defamation would sink into deserved neglect and forgetfulness. But, alas, appeals to the bad passions of our fallen nature are seldom harmless. Reflections upon the personal and public character of several of our Ministers were, by these anonymous scribes, pressed upon the attention of the Methodist mind with such pertinacity, and even harshness of repetition, that at length a feeling of distrust was somewhat extensively produced in the body; and even men of pure minds, who were unwilling to believe evil of any one, and especially of the honoured Ministers of Christ who were recklessly assailed, began to fear that there might be some truth in the allegations.— Evil surmising and evil speaking were extensively promoted, and religion was wounded in the house of her friends.

Here then was a sin of fearful magnitude and aggravation, committed in the bosom of a Christian community; the sin of slander, reviling, and defamation; the sin of propagating and placing upon public record flagrant untruths, which the writers knew, or might have known, to be such; the sin of attempting to render the public services of gifted, pious, and even aged, Ministers of Christ useless, both to the church and the world; the sin of promoting evil-speaking, jealousy, and wrath among religious people, and that to the widest possible extent; the sin of attempting to shake the public confidence in the management of one of the largest and most successful Missionary Societies in the world, and of thus depriving self-denying Missionaries of their support, and of withholding the word of salvation from the perishing Heathen. This sin was not hastily committed, under the impulse of temporary and excited feeling; but was deliberately planned, and then pertinaciously perpetrated through a series of years, and that with unabated malignity; the writers never betraying the least signs of relenting towards the men whom they so bitterly unguessed. Speaking of Mr. Wesley, the late Robert Hall has said, "I would not incur the guilt of that virulent abuse which Toplady cast upon him, for points merely speculative, and of very little importance, far ten thousand worlds." Yet the abuse which Toplady lavished upon Mr. Wesley never surpassed, in rancour and malice, the abuse which the "Fly Sheet" writers have poured upon several living Ministers of the Wesleyan body.

These proceedings, when compared with the law of Christ, appear in all their atrocity.

The violation of these holy precepts, on the part of the "Fly Sheet" writers, was the more

Hall's Works, vol. v., p. 423.

inexcusable, because, as Methodists, and, above all, as Methodist Preachers, they were not only at liberty to seek the removal of any abuses in the Connexion that might come under their observation, but were bound and even pledged to seek their removal in a constitutional and honourable manner. They knew that the regular courts of the body were open to them continually. A distinct challenge was also given to them twice every year, in the District Meetings and in the Conference, to prefer any accusation against the Missionary Secretaries, and the Rev. Treasurer: the meeting of the Missionary Committee of review, which is held every year on the day which precedes the opening of the Conference, was accessible to them; and there they might have sought an explanation of anything in the management of the Missions, which they might deem unsatisfactory, and there they might have even urged their complaints. But in all these places the accusers were as silent as death; they never showed their faces to the men whom they accused; they never preferred any complaint before the tribunals that were competent to deal with them; thus leading every disinterested observer to the conclusion, that these writers sought the removal of no grievances, but rather the gratification of some private resentment or jealousy, and the introduction of general confusion.

The duty of the Conference to attempt the extinction of this evil, few persons, it is presumed, will deny. It was an injury to some of the most useful men that the Wesleyan Connexion ever knew; and these men naturally looked for protection and redress to the Conference, whose faithful servants they were. The matter was an occasion of triumph to infidel scoffers, of deep and bitter sorrow to multitudes of devout people in our own societies, and an occasion of scandal to other denominations of Christians, who saw men publicly professing and teaching spiritual religion, thus biting and devouring one another. In the year 1847 the Conference published a strong and decisive testimony against this organized system of calumny; but was not able at that time to lay its hand upon the guilty parties, who, it has since been ascertained, had pledged themselves to an inviolable secrecy.

CHOICE OF MEASURES THAT CONFERENCE MIGHT HAVE ADOPTED.

Two courses only were therefore open to the Conference: either that of passing the matter over, acknowledging the suspected men as brother Ministers, appointing them to our pulpits, and to the pastoral charge of our societies; or that of subjecting them to a personal examination as to their guilt or innocence in this matter. The continued recognition of them as brother Ministers, vehemently and generally suspected as they were of a fearful amount of moral guilt, appeared to be utterly incompatible with the solemn trust which the Conference sustained; for it necessarily involves unfaithfulness to Christ, and to the spiritual interests of his people. Can the purity of the evangelical ministry be lawfully sacrificed to a mere technicality? The Conference has from the beginning possessed the unquestioned right of examining not only Candidates for admission into connexion with it, but its own members, on all points affecting their Christian and ministerial character, or the peace and prosperity of the body; and it resolved to exercise this right in the case of these suspected men. Through the whole of their ministerial life every one of them had been annually questioned on the subject of his orthodoxy, and his continued attachment to the Wesleyan economy; and it was felt to be perfectly fair, in this fearful emergency, to question them as to whether or not they were concerned in this grievous system of immorality, by which the whole Connexion was dishonoured. Feeling that the law of Christ had been violated by one of the most vile and malignant conspiracies that ever disgraced a religious community; feeling at the same time that it was now in a situation to deal with the evil, and that if it neglected the opportunity, it would be a partaker of the sin; the Conference first called the suspected ringleader of the mischief, and through the medium of its own officers, asked him whether or not he was concerned in the authorship, or in the publication, of the "Fly Sheet." He replied, that to this question he would give no answer. If charges were preferred against him, he would meet them, and defend himself; but to no such question as that which was now proposed, would he return any reply, even upon pain of expulsion. Other men, and some of whom were known to have been extensively concerned in the mischiefs of agitation, were questioned in the same manner, and avowed the same determination. Attempts were made to bring them to a different mind. A Committee, comprehending some of the most aged Ministers of the body, with others who had filled offices involving great trust and responsibility, was appointed, to meet with the men who thus placed themselves in an attitude of hostility towards their brethren, to hear their reasons, and, if needful, to remonstrate with them; but to no purpose. He who first made the declaration of refusal to answer, declined, even when sent for, to meet either the Conference or the Committee with reference to any argument on the subject

of the others, two who met the Committee not only persisted in their refusal to answer the question proposed, but even to give any pledge of abstinence from future agitation. The Conference therefore deemed it to be a matter of solemn duty, both to God and his church, by three successive votes, to sever these men from ministerial connexion with itself.

MR. EVERETT AND MARTIN LUTHER.

To thoughtless persons, listening to popular oratory amidst the excitement of a public meeting, it seems a marvellous exhibition of moral courage, that three men should have dared to set the whole Methodist Conference at defiance, and they think the men worthy of being compared with the great German Reformer, when he stood before the Diet of Worms. They forget that Luther stood there for the announcement and defence of the truth; and these three men for the concealment of sin.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Original Matter is particularly requested. This Paper such as, Local Intelligence—Biographies—Notices of the Introduction, rise, and progress of Methodism in Circuits, Revivals, and remarkable Conversions—Articles on education, temperance, literature, science, and religion—Illustrations of Providence—Sketches of Scripture characters—Interesting anecdotes—Descriptions of natural scenery—Papers on any prominent feature of Methodism, &c. &c. as a general rule, should be short and pithy; as a judicious variety in each number is the secret of newspaper popularity and usefulness.

For the Wesleyan. MOUNT ALLISON, SACKVILLE, N. B. 29th September, 1849.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—It has been determined by the Wesleyan Ministers on this, and some of the neighbouring Circuits, to hold Preachers Meetings semi-quarterly during the present District year. The primary object of this arrangement is the promotion of our own personal piety, and the encouragement of each other to diligence and fidelity in the great work to which we are called. To secure this object we design employing several hours, together,—1st, in reporting the apparent progress of the work of God in our own souls, and through our instrumentality, in our different spheres of toil, as ministers of Jesus Christ; 2nd, in earnest prayer to the Captain of our Salvation, that He may more perfectly qualify us for the duty to which He calls us; and 3rd, in fervent supplications for the more general and copious effusions of the Holy Spirit upon our assemblies, that our efforts for the promotion of the Divine Glory may be rendered increasingly efficient.

But we think that we may secure a second object—that by connecting with our meetings some public special religious services, these occasions may be rendered interesting and profitable to the members of our Church and congregation in each of the different places in which we may assemble—accordingly we design inviting our lay friends to meet repeatedly with us, when we are together, for public prayer, exhortation, and other religious exercises.

Our first meeting is to be held (D. V.) in Sackville, on Tuesday the 16th October next.

The Preachers are to meet at 2 o'clock, p.m. Public exercises on Tuesday evening, Wednesday forenoon and evening.

Love Feast and Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on Wednesday afternoon at 2 o'clock.

The Brethren Crosscombe, Smithson, Hemigar, DesBrisay, Pickard, Allan and Chesley have engaged to be present, and a cordial invitation is given to any of our Brethren in either of the Districts, who can make it convenient to join us in these services.

We hope that many of our lay members and friends also will make arrangements to be present—seeking spiritual good. We can answer for our Sackville friends, that they will make provision for the comfortable accommodation of all who may come with that intent. We say then, friends, let us come together, anticipating "a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

It is designed to hold our second meeting at Point de-Butte, but of this due notice will be given hereafter.

Yours truly, H. P.

For the Wesleyan. NOTICES OF NEWFOUNDLAND. [No. 5.]

If in meeting with a murmurer against Newfoundland you were to put the question, "What are the evils of which you complain?" I think he would be obliged to pause for an answer, that

is for a reasonable and just answer. In the reports he probably feels the loss of cultivated society, there being seldom more than two or three families in one place who have any taste for things literary and refined; and these are generally the merchant, the magistrate, the parson and the doctor. Such places as Harbour Grace, Carbonear and Brigus have a greater number; but in general Newfoundland is as barren in the intellectual and moral as it is in the natural world. But while the merchant gets rich he does not care for society; and while the magistrate is able to keep order among her Majesty's subjects he is content; and while the doctor gets paid and keeps in patience with his patients he is equally pleased; and as for the minister, if he have not learned with the apostle to be content in whatever station he is placed, the sooner he learns the lesson or gives place to a better man, the better it will be for his own soul and the people's! I can sympathize with the poor worldly merchant, magistrate, and doctor, should they feel discontented in a desolate district; but the Missionary is supposed to have counted the cost. He confesses in apostolic language, "Lo we leave all and follow thee!" He professes to embody and personify the spirit and doctrine of self-sacrifice. Instead of fearing poverty and hardship and death he professes to "glory in tribulation." If he therefore murmur he has either lost his religion or he never had any. If he find fault with the country he finds fault with God for sending him here. Let him look at Feejee, at Gambia, at Western Africa, let him count the graves of missionaries at Sierra Leone, and be thankful God sent him to such a healthy clime as Newfoundland. Probably the murmurer complains of the want of those many convenient and nice things for the body and domestic comfort as are easily obtainable in large market towns. But with industry, prudence and economy his house and cellar may be tolerably well furnished. He surely can dig a garden and plant vegetables, potatoes and cabbage in particular—he may grow fruit also; he may enclose as much ground as he please and fence it; and if he have any income above an ordinary labourer he may purchase many of the luxuries of life. If therefore a man cannot live comfortably in Newfoundland he cannot live any where. It is the fisherman, the hardy, storm-beaten fisherman, who has cause, if cause there really be, to complain. His life is daily exposed, above the ordinary and common exposure to danger and death. He draws his means of subsistence from the very gulph of death. His wife and children, in eating the bread he has earned, feel something as David felt when his three mighty men cut through the host of the Philistines and drew him water from the well of Bethlehem. He said, "My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: Shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with jeopardy of their lives they brought it." 1 Chron., 11: 19. The fisherman prepares his gear, and early in the morning he leaves his family and home and commits himself to the God of providence as he hoists the sails. The morning he and his companions bid us farewell, is fair and beautiful. They expect to leave us for a few days at least, and we bid them God speed, and stand idling a minute or two on the beach to see them sail away, remarking "What a fine time away they have!" The day passes, the night comes, and with it signs of gathering storms. A swift passing cloud and howling blast come like heralds of an approaching foe. The howling wind increases in strength, and the night is darker. But the fisherman's wife is not yet alarmed. A dreadful blast now strikes the cabin and every timber shakes. "Children," she remarks, "father will have to lie to-night, he will not be able to fish," and this with great calmness. But hark! A deep hollow noise is heard. 'Tis not thunder; nor "the sound of abundance of rain;" as

"The rattling showers rise on the blast."

What noise is that? 'Tis the first growl of old ocean who is at length roused from his slumbering calm. These hollow blasts which swept singly and swiftly along at first were messengers from the vast body of "waters above the firmament" to the body of "waters under the firmament;" and that distant roar, booming in a thousand eaves, spoke of the operation of a law by which the two mighty bodies sympathize and move in unison. How speedily a clap of thunder followed! As if each wing of the two invincible hosts fired royal salutes on their meeting. Hark, again! Oh, another booming sound from the sea! Now look at the fisherman's wife. Fear takes hold upon her. Perhaps at that moment a little one has been awake from his sleep by the thunder, and he calls out "Father." She goes and takes him up. "Tay father is gone child, and if God be not very merciful this night thou wilt see him no more." She kneels; her children are around her on their knees. Now the fierce elements rage. She hastes with her child to a neighbour's house. Her alarmed and trembling mothers are there, equally anxious for the fate of their loved one. All night the storm rages, and if for a moment the watcher is over-come with anxiety and fatigue as to sleep a moment, in her vision she sees her loved sons and husband struggling in the storm, or on a broken spar, or hears the last call for God for

help. Morning comes, the day passes, storm rages as if it would

"Confound and swallow navigation"

But they come not. At length a sail is seen ploughing its way round the another once more. She listens to the secure once more. She listens to others to enquire the likelihood of th those they have left behind. Encourag held out; and she returns. The nig passes, and morning comes, and the storm. Yet they come not. "Th has sheltered in some harbour." Ho her up; the week passes, and yet th not and then the overwhelming convic her to the ground—"THEY ARE LOST supports the widow? Who provide fatherless babes? He who has said thy fatherless children, and I will press alive; and let thy widows trust in M colonial government is most humane i actor, and its efforts to relieve the de most prompt and ample. Such a fa as the above, leads you to the chief Newfoundland's misfortunes. 'Tis not th healthiest in the world; 'tis not th ness of its soil, for the "treasures of a greatly compensate. It is the risk and of its ocean sons to daily danger and death. Perhaps the words of England bard, would be too strong an applicat above:—

"—each new morn
"New widows howl, new orphans
"Strike heaven in the face!"

because when we consider this daily wonder is we have not more shipw loss of crews. Our bays and harbour commodious and safe. But it is astoni what a fearless and reckless spirit our launch out into the deep. They off the of the sailor who in course of co was asked by a gentleman, "When father die?" "At sea." "And who grandfather die?" "At sea." "Th not read of going to sea?" "No." "Pray where did your father die?" said the gentleman. "And where grandfather die?" "In bed." "Th not afraid of going to bed?" asked Ju is the force of habit, and when, as i stances, it is founded on faith in God the hardy fisherman to sing—

"If a storm should come and awake
"What matter? I still can ride and"

I conclude my present "Notice" wi your patience, and that of your reader passing so long upon matters which i terest you so much as those which r mission work in the colony. But as much for the interest of your Newfou scribes as for others, another "Noti nature and cause of that distress whi presses heavily upon the colony, may acceptable to them.

For the Wesleyan. LEAFLET, No. 6.

INSTINCT.

A traveller rested on a plain which was clothed with miniature short grass, and wild flowers, and large. Tea berry bushes and sweet fine fragrance to the September breeze freshened a neighbouring expanse where sail boats sped through the gulf, and a gentle surge rolled to beach. A rock, warmed by the sun, the traveller instead of sofa or ch lounge was enjoyed with the zest w imports. Crumbs fell on the rock the herbage at its side. The ex trilling circumstance was of some a small tribe was located at a lit some furlongs from the camp, or a able table discovered the provision, e table bled crushed. One ant after tised on the crumbs, and, instead the moment, commenced tugging; bear away the prizes—to carry th to the common store house, as a addition to the winter stock. Some little creatures seized on lumps large selves, and with their usual perseve dragged or pushed, as the nature o admitted,—anxiously intent, appar accomplishing the prudent plans whi their community. The nearness of seemed not to give them any conce too much removed from their sphi observation, any more than a tree ing rock might. A step of his, t but, might crush some of the tri fore saw not the danger, and a no- vitation was, as if an object, some feet high, should suddenly appear bonhood of human habitations. case, however, the apparatus wou taken for some old mountain, and and consternation would result. The traveller soon went on his