

For the Christian Messenger.

Good news from Hillsburgh.

YAR SIR,

It was my happy privilege a few weeks since to assist the Baptist church at Hillsburgh, in a protracted effort in conjunction with the brethren Randall and Cogswell. Our meetings were evidently owned of God. The wandering backslider was reclaimed, and the impenitent sinner converted to Christ. This effort was followed by a similar one amongst our Methodist brethren whose zealous labours were greatly blest. Our dear bro. Parker has since enjoyed the sacred pleasure of baptizing seventeen professed converts on profession of faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. Others await the opportunity of following their Lord in like manner.

On Wednesday, the 28th inst., at the same place, I enjoyed the pleasure of being present at the laying of the first stone of a Baptist chapel. The ceremony was new to most of us, and as it was one of human origin, and having no divinely appointed formula for our guide, all felt that in such a case we were perfectly justifiable in consulting our own taste. One chief desideratum in erecting chapels being money, it was wisely resolved by our Masters of ceremony, that all persons wishing to participate in the honour of laying the corner stone should deposit on its surface a free-will offering in the form of cash. This important preliminary, furnishing some thirty dollars, being secured, an address was delivered by your humble correspondent. In the course of which advertence was made to the religious state of the country as connected with Baptist interests, and also to its literary condition when first he passed through it—being twenty-six years ago. There were at that period but three or four Baptist Meeting-houses between Bridgetown and Yarmouth; and these were unfinished or dilapidated. His first sermons in this country were preached in dwelling-houses. Now there are on the same ground twenty Baptist chapels, besides two or three in the course of erection, a portion of which are creditable buildings and in keeping with the improvement of the community. There are also on the same route ten ordained pastors, while the old style of school-houses has given place to more respectable and proper successors.

The chapel now building at Hillsburgh promises to be a credit to the rising and picturesque village in which it is most conspicuously situated. The site commands a most delightful view of Bear River which gracefully meanders past its front, seeming to say to the willing convert "See, here is water"; while the eye at a sweep traverses an undulating landscape, rich in almost every variety of form and production, the whole scene hymning forth the praises of the glorious Maker, God.

The house is to be 60 x 40, with a vestry in the basement 40 feet square. The pews are all sold and brought upwards of £120!!

I must not omit making honourable mention of the ladies, who, after the money and mortar ceremony, had the doors of the neat little "Temperance Hall" thrown open, when a scene that must have satisfied the most fastidious epicure, presented itself to some hundreds of sparkling eyes. The statement of this simple fact is sufficient for all persons who have at any time attended a soiree prepared by the ladies of Hillsburgh. To such as have not enjoyed so rich a treat, we would just say, be sure and be present at the next and see for yourselves. In conclusion I would only add my humble opinion—that if the work of progression on the newly-laid corner-stone advance in proportion to the work of demolition at the sea-tables, there will be no danger of the house being a failure.

Yours &c.,

R. W. CUNNINGHAM.

Digby, May 20, 1856.

Extract of a letter from Rev. Jas. Parker.

"On the first Sunday of the present month I had the pleasure of baptizing two in connection with this church, and I think I shall baptize again next Sabbath. The good work is still progressing in Pleasant Valley."

"June 8th.—I baptized five last Sabbath. It was a deeply interesting day to this church. I am very much encouraged in my labour, hoping to see many vessels of mercy brought to Christ in this place."

In great haste, yours truly,

JAMES PARKER.

For the Christian Messenger.

Our Church practices.

DEAR BROTHER,

I am much pleased with the remarks of your correspondent, "Hint," on the innovations introduced into our churches with regard to the manner of conducting the worship of God. There are many other changes which have taken place among us of late years which I believe are not for the better but for the worse. Conformity to the sentiments and usages of Pedobaptist churches and of the world are very prevalent among us at the present day. How is it that we have changed very materially in doctrine, mode of preaching, order of Divine worship, manner of making converts, and in the government and discipline of our churches, and yet the Articles of our constitution remain the same, unchanged. But I rejoice to know that these changes are not universal. The old ministers, so far as my information extends, preach the old doctrines of Divine sovereignty and eternal election as they are contained in the Bible and in our Articles, and a goodly number of our churches seem to imitate the pattern of church discipline laid down in the New Testament, but it seems evident to me that those who are for the old ways had better take a decided stand and contend earnestly but peaceably for "the faith once delivered to the saints." Of course we shall not be so popular with the world nor with some other denominations, and perhaps we shall not make so many converts, but I will venture to say that we shall have more of the humble, devoted and persevering followers of Jesus identified. The great Head of the Church has said "ye are not of the world." The apostles could appeal to the order, regularity and holiness of their churches and converts as a clear proof of the purity of those doctrines which they inculcated. They are addressed as "the seal of their Apostleship in the Lord," as their "living epistles known and read of all men." And why? Because "they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers." &c. If we would have their reward let us follow their example. I hope that "Hint" or some pen more able than mine may continue to give us something upon the importance and necessity of continuing in the old ways.

ONE OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

Lunenburg Co., May 31st, 1856.

Religious Intelligence.

[Abridged from the Freeman.]

THE ASSOCIATIONS.

The Baptist churches in London have now had their share of good things, and the turn of the country has come. The rural Association often fairly competes with the metropolitan "May meeting" in religious interest and usefulness. Not to mention the superior antiquity of the former institution. For our forefathers delighted in Associations when Missionary Societies were not, and before Exeter Hall was dreamed of.

There linger even yet some lovers of the olden time who cast regretful retrospective glances upon the ante-railway period, and often describe with much gusto the gatherings of the churches in those days. Associations were Associations then! The honour of entertaining the annual assembly was a prize often keenly contested. The prospect of the meeting set the whole neighbourhood astir. Many a minister or "messenger" had to rise before the dawn on Monday morning, that he might be at the scene of gathering by noon on Wednesday. Every kind of vehicle made its way, to the "Blue Lion," or the "Spotted Dog," which the previous year's Circular Letter had indicated as the place of rendezvous. Not a few travellers arrived with a scanty knapsack and a trusty staff. All came as to something worth an effort. They hungered for the bread of life, and a plentiful supply was provided. Then, the discussions had all the solemnity, as well as much of the binding power, of the deliberations of a synod. The "ministers and messengers" felt that they had real work to do.

As far as was in them, they had to express the collective sense of the churches on topics both without and within their pale. Such meetings, indeed, were almost the only organs of the denomination. "In Association assembled," as the phrase was, the brethren felt as if on some watch-tower, commanding a wider horizon than that which ordinarily lay out-stretched before them. Accordingly they spoke with dignity and authority on the topics of the day; giving the world to understand what religious bodies thought of its movements and affairs, and sometimes exercising an important influence on the progress of events. But the chief anxiety was ever concentrated upon the inner life of the churches. Cases of conscience were regularly submitted to the Associations for decision, and their verdict was usually accepted as final. Heresies, real or supposed, were diligently sought out and visited with protest or discipline in the suspension of the offending church. Inconsistent brethren were remonstrated with in tones which the church in modern times is unaccustomed to hear, and which it would, perhaps, scarcely endure. The state of piety in the churches and the means of quickening languid or decaying zeal, often engaged anxious consideration. Sometimes, though not so frequently, it must be confessed, as of later times,—the extension of the kingdom of Christ was a topic of discussion, of exhortation, and prayer. It will never be forgotten that the commencement of the era of modern Missions to the Heathen was in a resolution of the Northamptonshire Association.

It may appear a digression, but in reality our subject leads directly to the remark,—how expressive and how truthful the word "denomination," as descriptive of our churches collectively! For it must be carefully remembered that ours is not in any strict sense of the word a body. General organization there is and can be none. The only unity is that which arises from the churches possessing the same "denomination,"—that is, the same name, expressing of course a general similarity of belief and discipline. But there is no corporate unity; we can never speak of "the Baptist church," as we do of "the Presbyterian," or even of "the Wesleyan church." Nay, there is no tribunal that has any power to determine what churches have a right to the name. No one can mark the limits of "the Baptist denomination." Societies that some disown, others recognize. The annual and very useful list of Baptist ministers in our Magazine curiously illustrates the impossibility of accurately defining the title, for any practical purposes of co-operation or fellowship.

Is this a defect in our system? Not for a moment. We are *jure divino* Independents; and even apart from the law of God, we believe that Independency has much advantage every way. Still there must be in men who think and feel alike on the greatest of topics, a craving for fellowship. The unity of their spirits will seek to manifest itself in some outward form. Their hearts are one,—why should they not hold fraternal counsel? their lives are consecrated to the same enterprise,—why should they not work together? Hence the "Associations," the "Societies," and other institutions so common amongst us, which supplement, while they must never be allowed to contravene, our independency.

The time we think has come when the state of the churches themselves should be the great topic at every Association meeting. In most Associations of which we know anything, the prayer-meetings at six o'clock in the morning are always among the most delightful and profitable services of the Anniversary. Nor is there usually anything to complain of on the score of attendance. But we need yet more fervent prayer; with searchings of heart, and honest enquiries, as to whether there is anything in our churches, our ministry, or ourselves, that needs to be thoroughly amended. There may be some points even yet on which we are all wrong. To admit this, as a possibility at least, will be a first step to improvement. This fact of itself supplies sufficient topics for deliberation and for prayer. We do not advocate a return to "Double Lectures;" but it would be well for us if there were more of that strong, simple-hearted devotion, in which our fathers were so mighty.

Baptists in Jamaica.

The annual meeting of the Jamaica Baptist Union was held at Montego Bay on February 11th, 12th, and 13th, 1856. The pastors and others or committees met to attend preliminary business on Thursday, and all the delegates came to the place of meeting on Saturday after the first Sunday in February. The meet-

ings were well attended, and a spirit of harmony and peace prevailed. Indeed, every one felt it good to be there; and the pastors and representatives, at the close of the meetings, returned home resolved to do more than ever for the prosperity of the churches of Christ.

All the public services were remarkably well attended.

On Thursday evening, the Rev. J. M. Philippo preached the sermon on "The necessity of the Spirit's influences." On Friday evening, the 8th, a public missionary meeting was held.

On Sunday, the 10th, a prayer meeting was held at half-past six. At half-past ten, the Rev. D. Day preached to a crowded congregation, when about 2,500 must have been present. Between the afternoon and evening service an out-door service was held in the Market-place, when the Rev. S. Hodges addressed about 2,000 individuals on the future judgement.

On Monday, at twelve o'clock, a public meeting was held, to take into consideration the government education measures before the Legislative Council, and although it did not disperse till three o'clock, yet at half-past six in the evening there was again a good congregation to listen to the letter to the churches on "The Influence of Social Habits on the Religious Character," prepared by the Rev. D. J. East, and which occupied one hour and three-quarters in reading. The unbroken attention paid showed that the friends were thoroughly interested in the subject.

On Tuesday evening, at seven o'clock, the eighth and last public service in connection with the Union was held, when the place was again thronged. The first part of the service was occupied by devotional services, and the reading of the annual report of the churches by the secretary, the Rev. B. Millard. This done, the Rev. J. M. Philippo presided, and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was administered to the pastors, delegates, and members of the Baptist churches in the town. The Rev. W. Dundy addressed the officers of the churches on their responsibilities; the Rev. D. Day urged on members of the churches the duties they owe to each other, and the cause of God; the Rev. E. Hewitt impressed on the young members their position in the church; and the Rev. J. Clark appealed to the unconverted who were present as spectators.

In addition to these more public meetings, a prayer-meeting was held each morning in the Union-street chapel, where the Rev. J. E. Henderson ministers the Word of Life. These prayer-meetings were seasons of sweet communion with the Father of Spirits, and no doubt exerted a beneficial influence on the minds of both pastors and delegates, who assembled in this place, to transact the business of the Union, which embraces forty-eight churches, which are represented by the pastors and one delegate from each church.

On Monday morning, the 11th of February, the Rev. J. M. Philippo was requested, under resolution of last year's meeting, to take the chair, when he opened the meeting by delivering a deeply interesting address, setting forth the principles and practices, the obstacles and triumphs, of Nonconformists in Jamaica.

In forty-seven churches, during the past year, there have been baptized, 809; restored, 520; received, 188; increased, 1,526. There have died, 374; have been excluded, 786; have been dismissed, 45; have withdrawn, 73; decrease, 1,278. Total net increase, 248. Number of members, 17,332; number of enquirers, 1,803; number of Sabbath-school scholars, 8,742; teachers, 750. The reports showed that in only three of the forty-seven churches there had been no addition by baptism.

The report of the Theological Institution to the board was read, when it was resolved: "That the meeting has heard read with feelings of the liveliest satisfaction the reports of the Theological and Normal School Institutions at Calabar. It would express its great pleasure in observing that the churches in all parts of the island take an increased interest in this valuable institution."

In connection with the stations of the Union, the Sabbath-schools have 8,742 scholars, and 750 teachers. Had all the schools been reported, it would be seen that the number of scholars is close upon 9,500.

The spiritual condition of several portions of the island being referred to, the question was put whether the board could adopt any measures to supply such localities as are destitute of the means of grace. After some conversation, it was resolved:—"That brother Hodges be requested to prepare a paper, by the