

The English Baptist Missionary Society.

The Annual Meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society was held on Thursday, April 27th, in Exeter Hall, Sir S. M. Peto, Bart, M. P., in the chair.

The proceedings commenced by singing the hymn—

"Ye nations round the earth rejoice Before the Lord, your Sovereign King."

The Rev. S. Gray, of Windsor, offered prayer. The Rev. F. Trestrail read an abstract of the report.

The Chairman then rose and said: It now becomes my duty, as treasurer, to read the balance sheet. The receipts for general purposes, during the year, have been 18,817.1. 4d. He gave a rapid sketch of the expenditure in the various countries where the Agents of the Society are laboring, India, Ceylon, China, West Africa, Jamaica, Bahamas, Trinidad, Haiti and France, and urged to greater zeal and devotion to the work. "The question is," said he, "Are we as a denomination, doing all we can in regard to Christian Missions? I unhesitatingly say we are not. You ask me for my proof, and I simply ask you to look at the sums we have spent in building new chapels at home, and to ask whether the slight increase which has taken place while I have been treasurer of your Society, is at all proportionate therewith. I am distressed to say that they bear no comparison whatever. We ought to have it in our hearts to inquire, "How is this?" and humbling ourselves before the Lord to determine in His strength that it shall be so no longer. With regard to India, we have expended 14,700l.—a large sum; but what is the position of India at the present moment? India now is not the India of ten years ago. You have a civilisation going on there that is awakening enquiry and speculation; and, I say, that unless the glorious Gospel of the blessed God is preached throughout India, you will simply have the casting aside of idolatry and infidelity grasped instead. Are you prepared for this?" "Now let me mention what is doing in the North of Europe. In Norway at the present moment there is one of the most extensive awakenings of many years past. We have an agent there, a godly man raised up in Norway itself; but I have often had it in my heart to bring the claims of that country before our committee; for what can one agent do among so many people? Take Russia. In South Russia there is an awakening which has excited large public attention. There are three gentlemen there at the present time—men holding a respectable commercial position—who are imprisoned for having embraced the Gospel. And let me say—for this is an occasion on which we ought to acknowledge services done by those who are not connected with our own denomination—that a deputation of good men of various denominations representing the Evangelical Alliance, is about to wait upon the Emperor to ask for the release of these brethren. But are you prepared if they are released to respond to the call to send the Gospel there? I have extensive works in Australia, and I happen to know that there never was a time when a larger or more promising field was opened to the view of Christian people, than Australia at the present moment. If we could, as a Society, say to a good many godly men who at this moment are without pastoral charge, "Go there and we will help you for a few years." I believe that many self-supporting churches would be raised."

The Rev. W. Farebrother, of the London Missionary Society, in moving a resolution, said in referring to India—"and I should not be doing my duty if I did not refer to India first at a meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society, and I cannot speak of the names of the honoured men who were the pioneers there but with the profoundest respect—what was the position of India fifty years ago? Contrast Lord Minto's administration with the administration of Sir John Lawrence. The former declared that no missionary should enter India, and when seven brethren landed at Calcutta they were placed under restraint; two of them, however, dropping down the river and finding shelter under some nominally heathen flag. I wonder whether any one would dare to repeat the calumnies which were uttered against our missionaries in India at that period. There were not five hundred persons throughout that vast country who had broken caste and placed themselves under Christian instruction, and now there are not fewer than 218,000 who have done so. I find that there are no less than 50,000 Christians inhabiting one part of Burmah, and in every one of the mountain valleys there is a church, a manse, and a minister sustained by the voluntary contributions of the people. Look at the position of British India, the craving for intelligence, indicating a great social revolution in progress; and I contend that this is mainly owing to the labours of men sent out by your Society and other similar institutions. Respecting China; when I left that country in 1846 there were about twenty who had been received into the fellowship of the churches, and now there are not less than 8,000, and every Lord's-day some 10,000 persons meet to read God's wonderful testimony and to bow the knee in prayer. I know how easy it is to say, what are these compared with the four hundred millions who inhabit that country; but we have no business to talk thus about the four hundred millions till we have preached the Gospel to them. The best way is to say, What are these 10,000 compared with the men you have sustained? and I contend that the answer is sufficient to make us bend the knee in adoring gratitude." "The state of things in China is such as to require our most patient consideration. In estimating the results of modern missions, let us glance at Madagascar. It was said that the people there, if deprived of the presence of the missionaries, would go back

to their idolatry. God suffered this to happen, and, besides this, I know nothing in the persecution of Diocletian or of Nero, or in the days of Mary, more fierce than that which these native Christians had to endure in Madagascar. But what is the state of things now? In Antananarivo there are 10,000 people out of 40,000, who, with more or less regularity, attend the public worship of God. There are seven large churches, two of which will accommodate 1,500 each, and in almost every village round there are small bodies of Christians presided over by one of their own number. Upon the whole, I believe that the inroads on heathenism during the last seventy years have been greater even than those made by the Apostles and the fathers during the first century of the Christian era; and if there be any foundation for that statement, again I say there is enough to call forth our adoring gratitude." "God requires sacrifice, and He accepts sacrifice. Then, let us compare results. Missions are costly, but look at the South Sea Mission. Look at those 250 islands, where there is not a vestige of idolatry. The cost of the whole thing, from first to last, is not quite so much as you have spent upon building the Warrior. The whole cost of the Madagascar Mission has hitherto been treated like throwing a penny to a questionable beggar. May I, Sir, offer a practical suggestion? It is said that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is going to take two-pence off the Income tax. Let the wealthy members of the Baptist churches give that sum to your Society, during the ensuing year. I doubt not that, from this date, our missionary meetings will assume a different character. There is a kind of harvest shout about them. I have spoken of success, but let us take care that we give God all the glory. "O, sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvelous things. His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory."

The Rev. W. Sampson, of Serampore, said: Mr. Chairman, I rise for the purpose of supporting the resolution which has been already moved and seconded, and if my work consisted merely in an effort to support the resolution, it would very soon be done. For more reasons than one, I should be glad for my own sake, if I felt it consistent with the duty which has been laid upon me, if I could sit down at once, but there are some things which, as I have just come from the mission field in India, I should like to say. (Cheers.) My work this morning has been to some extent cut away from me; but I should like the meeting, if it has not some idea of actual mission work in India, to have just a notion of what it really is. I shall speak, not so much perhaps of actual mission work, as of what we are doing generally in Serampore and in the Serampore College. I confess that I would not have gone out to India ten years ago to do the work which for the past ten years I have been doing there. I went out with the intention of being an ordinary missionary, and my chief object was to be engaged in going amongst people and preaching to them day after day the unsearchable riches of Christ. But man proposes and God disposes, and circumstances as plainly indicated direction and providence as circumstances can do, that I should engage in the special work with which I have been connected, and though I would not have gone out to do that work ten years ago, it would only have been because of my excessive ignorance of what the claims of India were. I will, as soon as God restores my health, and if you will send me, go back to do that work, and as long as God gives me strength to labour will carry it on. (Cheers.) I should like you to have a clear understanding of what the work is which we are doing in the Serampore College. I fear that the large majority of the supporters of this Society think that that College stands in the same relation to India as the Regent's park or the Bristol College stands in to England. I only wish that it was so, and that we had such institutions scattered through the land. We are seeking to the utmost of our ability to give a religious education to as many as will come to us to receive it, and I believe that there is no part of the mission work of more importance to the ultimate benefit of that great country in a Christian point of view, than the work which we have had the privilege of doing there. If you could but see that work for yourselves; if you could see between 400 and 500 native students gathered together every day to receive instruction; if you could see them standing in the hall in the early morning before the commencement of the duties of the day, and bending the head as one of us asks the Divine blessing on the labours of the day; if you could follow them as they file off class after class to their rooms and occupy the first hour in the day in receiving instruction from the Bible; if you could see the interest evident in the faces of these lads, and the eagerness with which they listen to any explanations of truth which we are able to give them; if you could see that during the hour there is scarcely any necessity to call for the attention of a single member of the class,—I am sure you would feel that that work which we are doing there is not in vain. I know that in connection with the Institution we give secular education—and I grant it is for secular education that the majority of the scholars come—but whenever a new student comes to enter his name, we tell him plainly that "We are a missionary institution. You have been for some time in Government schools where you have never heard the Bible read, but here you must attend the first hour of every day to hear what we have to say about the Bible and the truth of God," and I have never known a single individual stay away because he is expected to attend the Bible-class. (Cheers.) I should like, if time permitted, to

enter somewhat fully into the educational question in India. Some years ago the Government instituted schools in different parts of the country for the purpose of educating the people, and while what I am about to say may not perhaps be directly in connection with missionary efforts, and the results of the educational system in that country may not be considered as bearing directly on mission work, I know that the education which has been given through the length and breadth of India has done a vast amount of good. What, I ask, is Hindooism? You all of you know something about it; but you have only a very faint conception of the terrible power which it still exerts upon the minds of the masses of the people of India. The founders of the system had the folly, in originally teaching their religion to the people, to tell them that everything which they could possibly do or say was connected with religion. You will perhaps be startled at my saying that they had the folly to do this, for we sometimes wish that Christian men would do everything in connection with religion; but let me explain what I mean. The original teachers of Hindooism stood before the people and told them that they could learn nothing whatever unless it were divinely revealed to them from heaven; that there was no fact in geography, or astronomy, or any other science, which was not revealed in their divine books. When Government schools were established, and they began to teach the lads what geography and astronomy really were, the effect was, that as soon as Hindooism was brought into contact with Western science it could not stand before it, and there cannot be an educated Hindoo upon whose mind Hindooism as a religion can exercise much or any hold. While, therefore, the Government schools were not established with a religious object in view, I say, that indirectly, they have been the means of doing a vast amount of good. A large number of the educated young men felt that the religion in which they had been brought up was altogether a wrong one, and rested on no solid foundation, and as soon as they believed this they became infidels. They did not carry on the argument and say—"These European teachers have taught us true astronomy and geography, and it is possible, therefore, that they may teach us true religion;" but when the foundations of their old religious system were broken up their lost faith in any religion whatsoever, and I do not know that we can be surprised at it. It was the legitimate result of the education that so many of them were receiving; and when Dr. Duff went there some thirty years ago, and saw the condition of the native mind at that time, he took it upon himself as the one great object of his life to bring as many of those young men as he could under the influence of a sound religious education. There is not a man, I believe, in the whole world to whom India is so much indebted as it is to Alexander Duff, of the Free Church of Scotland. (Cheers.) A man who did not engage in the work as a mere matter of form, but gave himself to it with an energy and zeal almost entirely his own, and who had an iron constitution which enabled him to do the work of half-a-dozen men. The result of his mission has been most successful, and we are, to some extent, imitating it in our Serampore College. Going back to the educated young men of whom I spoke, and tracing their progress, let me tell you, that although they were at first landed in infidelity, they could not long remain there, but went on seeking for themselves the truth; and as one of the results of the educational movement they have now formed amongst themselves a society which is exerting an immense amount of influence upon the people. It is not a Christian Society, but a society whose members oppose Christianity and Christian missions wherever and whenever they have an opportunity; and, notwithstanding this, I for one hail the formation of such a society, for I would rather see the people thus banded together to oppose us, than I would see the stolid apathy and indifference which up to this time have been manifested towards us. (Cheers.) I am quite sure that the leading man of the society, the thinking and active man, who inspires them to their work, is, as far as we are capable of judging of him, an earnest seeker after truth. I should like you to see what is the position which these men have now attained, and what is the work which they are doing. I hold in my hand a volume of thirteen tracts published by the society, and which they endeavour to disseminate, as we do our tracts, amongst the people. I will read to you the titles of some of these tracts—"Prayer, its Spontaneity, its necessity, and its Utility"; "The Pilgrim of Love"; "Love every Man as thy Brother"; "Brethren, Love your Father" (meaning God); "He forsaketh none of us, may we never forsake Him." Among the tracts which I have here, is one controversial, one on "Revelation," and another on "Atonement and Salvation." I say it is a grand thing that, whatever may be the cause, the attention of these young men has been attracted towards subjects like these, and that they should occupy their time in meeting together to discuss them Sunday after Sunday as they do, and hold as orderly religious services as any which you can hold in this country, where they sing hymns, and offer up prayer, and give exhortations answering very much to our sermons. I should like to say a word or two about these tracts on "Revelation," and "Atonement and Salvation," because you would then see the exact position of these men. I may tell you briefly that just as the writings of Francis Newman and others of his school were prevalent here, and were sent out to India, the Brahmins had just arrived at the stage in their progress after truth, which made them feel that those books supplied the want they felt. They therefore received them at once as a Gospel, and preached most strongly at that time; and for

some few years after, the principle that all religion is founded in man's consciousness, and that it is to our own intuition we must look if we would have any truth revealed to us from heaven. I am afraid I must apologise for having said, as a Christian missionary, that I rejoice in these men thinking about these things, even though they advocate doctrines like those; but we must remember the position from which the men come—(Hear, hear)—we must remember that when they began their search after truth, they had not, as these teachers at home, the full light of truth; and whereas we mourn the writers to whom I have referred seem going back from the light in the semi-darkness in which they now are, we rejoice because these Hindoos, on the other hand, have come out from the darkness so great that it might be felt, into the twilight, a twilight I believe, in their case, not of the evening but of the morning. (Cheers.) If the life of the man is spared, who at present is the leading genius amongst them, and who inspires their actions, I believe that sooner or later he will come to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Even since this book was published he has advanced another step, and now preaches most fully the doctrine of the justice of God."

"There is one fact in the statistics which have been already alluded to, which I wish we had engraved in our hearts. Five per cent. per annum of the missionaries sent out from Europe and America die or are superannuated from their work, so that five per cent. per annum must be supplied by our churches if we would keep up the staff to its present state. We have in India thirty-seven missionaries, and to keep up the number you must send out two men every year. If you mean to increase your staff you must send more, but if you send two you only fill up the gaps. Now how many have you sent out? Why, for the last two years you have sent none, and for years before that you have only sent one; and I tell you the effect of it is, that I can now reckon up eight or ten men on my fingers who have been working there for twenty, twenty-five, thirty, and in one case forty years, whose lives no Society would assure for twelve months, and there is not a young man in the country who, when these men drop off, can step into their place. After naming several he said, "then there is our old friend, Williamson. (Cheers.) An old trembling man, but one of the finest Christians it has ever been my lot to associate with. He is working to the utmost of his power in the bazaars, and though he is so enfeebled that he cannot stand up without assistance, he is lifted every day into a conveyance and carried to the bazaar, and there he sits till his voice and strength fail him, preaching and talking to the people there. (Applause.) I have thanked God again and again that we had men to manage this Society like your treasurer, secretaries, and committees. I do not lay any blame on them; God forbid that I should. (Cheers.) I am not a personal friend of theirs, but they have always treated me better than I ever had a right to expect. No; it is to the country churches, and to you country pastors who are sent here to represent the country churches, that I would make my appeal. I appeal to you as one who has come from India. I mourned more when I left it than I mourned when I left my old father and mother to go there. The one human thing we want there now is help. The cry does not come to you from 180,000,000 of people—mark that; they are too low sunk in degradation and ignorance to know their want; but it comes from men, some of whom are tottering on the verge of the grave, men borne down by the heat and burden of the day. They ask you for help, and I ask you, what shall be the result of the appeal? These men, old and feeble as they are, do not give up the hope of success. If you do not send us help, we will do the work still; if you neglect our appeal, we will still, as long as strength and voice are given us, still go on with the work, and leave the result with our Father in heaven. (Loud applause.)"

The Rev. Charles Vince, of Birmingham, in the course of his speech, said, it is amazing what strange things have been prescribed for the cure of carnality. One of the saints used to teach that uncleanness of body was a great help to holiness; he said the filthy habits of a monk were the anchor which held him to his cell; for if he dressed as nicely, and was as clean, and smelt as sweet as other people, worldly folk would ask him to their parties, and so he would not maintain his piety. (Laughter.) I am afraid that some of these follies of Popery still linger among the Baptists. I have heard of some churches who keep their ministers poor in order to make them spiritual. (Laughter.) They seem to think that worldly goods would make them carnal, and so they assume to themselves the prerogatives of Divine Providence, and put their pastors through a discipline of lifelong poverty. Some people seem to think the same about this Society, but a greater fallacy was never uttered. The constant struggle with pecuniary difficulties, the dread of debt, and the spasms of liberality which are the result, cannot promote a high tone and pure spirit in our Society or any other. We hear people talk sometimes about a Society's "crippled resources," a phrase very suggestive of the crutches that they have to make for the crippled resources to walk upon; and I do not know anything which witnesses more to the shame of modern Christianity than the list of crutches which—shall I say sanctified ingenuity—some kind of ingenuity—has invented in order to help the crippled resources—bazaars, bouquets, fancy fairs, magic lanterns, photographs, and I know not what besides: to help resources, which if the liberality of the church were what it ought to be, would never be crippled at all. (Cheers.) I find that some of our friends seem to have a contempt for money. About fifteen years ago, when I was