

Wesleyan Methodism.

The origin and rapid progress of Methodism in the mother country, and in the world generally, has been considered one of the marvels of christian times. Its movements have been heretofore considered necessarily onward, and it is strange to hear such a word as "decline" in connexion with that denomination. And yet we have of late heard such a word. Statistics are not always indicative of power, and we should not feel at liberty to conclude that because of smaller than usual increase in numbers, therefore there had been in reality a "decline."

THE DECLINE OF METHODISM.—We want nothing new in Methodism. Every modern innovation has proved an evil. The alteration of the Sunday evening services from six to half past six, has set aside Sunday night prayer meetings by which thousands used to be brought to God. The giving out at once of four, or six, or even eight-line verses, may be the victory of organisers and choirs over ministers and congregations; but it has so altered Methodist worship, that wearing formality has in many places superseded the once lively worship; and the singing in which all used to join, is now often a performance of singers, rather than an act of devotion. Society meetings need to be revived. There are large circuits where none have been held for years. In some commodious chapels love-feasts are remembered only by some old members; certainly none have been held for years. The quarterly fast is on the plan, but never observed. Pastoral visitation—so often written about—is confined to home missionary work. Young people are being lost by thousands, simply because they are not cared for. We baptize children by thousands, but afterwards leave them to go where they like. We hear much against revivals. A publication written by a leading Methodist minister is against all that do not square with his notions of propriety; and we read lately in the Watchman, in the Circuit Intelligence, that "one revivalist is enough in one circuit." The Methodist minister who is not a revivalist is out of his place.

At the recent meeting of Conference at Leeds, a report was made of the present condition of Methodism throughout the country. The following is the summary of total results:— On trial in March last..... 20,819 through the year..... 60,724 New members fully received (as reported)..... 24,962 Members received from other Circuits..... 6,816 Members removed to other Circuits..... 22,120 Deaths..... 6,860 Backsliders..... 16,947 Number in Society in the Districts..... 331,193

There are sixteen districts that have an increase, in the aggregate of 2,962. There are fifteen districts presenting in the aggregate a decrease of 2,596. The net increase in the districts is 366.

A discussion arose on the report. The following is a brief sketch of the remarks made:—

The Rev. W. Arthur (President) remarked that there was one point very plain, although many might dispute it. It was that the number of persons meeting in class formed a fair index of the amount of our spiritual prosperity. If there be conversions, if there be general spiritual quickening in a circuit, the effect is to be felt in the classes. On the other hand, if there is little zeal, joy, love, and power, the effect will be equally felt in the classes. Making every allowance, the number of members is a fair index of spiritual progress amongst us for any given year. He would say that, on the one hand, we had no reason to be discouraged, still less to be disheartened. It was a fact that during the last ten years the number added to our societies exceeded the whole number of Methodists gathered in during the lifetime of John Wesley; a sufficient proof that the Lord is with us still. On the other hand, had we no reason for alarm? In one sense, certainly not; but in the word in its military sense, he would say that we had reason for alarm. We are not to be discouraged; but the enemy is near at hand, and we must sound the trumpet, and be up and fighting; we must risk life and win the battle. Our great want is a thorough military alarm; for it is a fact that there has been no advance of our hosts—our army and that of the enemy are away to and fro, and we have not made a decided advance during the last two or three years. The morals of the country are deplorably lost. Taking a walk through London, a foreigner from a Pagan or Mohammedan country, so far from having the Gospel preached to him by what he saw, would see sights which were a disgrace to Christianity. The morals of the higher classes are in many instances bad; among the men, bad; among the women there is a strong tendency to superstition. One great danger which beset us was lest we should be content with Methodism being confined to one class—merely a stratum among the churches. Methodism was no special religion; we have no faith but that which comes from above, and is meant for all men, and for all times. Still, it is not advancing in this country; and in searching out the cause of this, it is necessary to clear our minds of the ten thousand small theories which we are apt to entertain. No little cause can account for a great effect. There is nothing more true than the assertion of John Wesley, that, in order to promote a revival or the work of God, it is necessary to dwell upon the doctrine of Christian perfection. He would refer to one or two of the small theories to which he had adverted. It was believed by some, that external progress had been effected, and efforts made to

the detriment of the spiritual life. From statistics collected by Mr. Morgan, the speaker showed that where there was the greatest external progress, in the same places, as a general rule, was there the greatest development of spiritual life. Another encouraging result he had gathered from the statistics of Morgan was, that our ratio of increase did not diminish with the accumulated increase of the societies, but that in many instances the largest societies were those which showed, not only actually, but proportionally, the highest increase. This he felt to be highly encouraging. In proportion as we multiply, we shall gain an accumulating power of extension. The great point was for all the preachers to become filled with the love of God and the love of souls, and it would then be easy to count our increase by the hundred thousand. The great trust which Wesley had bequeathed to us and the world was not so much a precise form of ecclesiastical order as a trust of a far higher kind—of pure doctrine and of holy discipline; not merely the discipline of prudential regulations, but of the supreme enforcement of Christ's law of holiness over all our members. In the chapter which had been read that morning, there are two words in describing the Christian bishop. He must be blameless, and he must be well reported of by them that are with him. If a Methodist preacher has a weakness for a good dinner, or for a glass of wine, somebody will be certain to approach him on the side of his weakness, and thus, unless he be watchful, he will fall into the snare of the devil. As a mere money question it would be cheaper for every preacher to subscribe a pound a year to keep the families of preachers whose conduct had disgraced their profession, than for such unfaithful men to be allowed to minister in the circuits and in the families of our people. For some time past, in contemplating these things, he had been led to pray that God would perfect His love in his heart and save thousands of souls.

Mr. Wadly stated that he believed the class meeting is a part of our system of discipline, as much as justification by faith is a part of our system of doctrine; and there was equal incongruity in regarding either the one or the other as an open question. By whatever means godly members of other churches were able to keep their faith alive, he could state, as the result of forty-two years' ministerial life, that he had never met with persons in Methodism eminent for piety, who were not devoted to class meetings. There was no other way amongst us for cultivating piety. His firm opinion was that if we laid aside class meetings the glory would depart from us. He had never advocated slackness in discipline in his respect. At the same time, he had felt deep interest in a large class of serious and intelligent hearers, who professed our ministry, are attached to our services, and appreciate our ministrations, and wish to attend, and in some instances do attend, the table of the Lord; and he wished that by some means formal recognition of these persons could be taken, believing that this would be the best means of getting them to attend class, and so to be fully united with our Church. The great quarry from which we dug our spiritual stores was the people outside the Church; not the degraded and wicked only, but the good, respectable sort of people who were in our chapels by thousands, and who only wanted converting to become an honour to our Church.

Dr. Rigg said that we had arrived at the gravest point in the history of Methodism in modern times. It depended on a right estimate of our present position whether we should advance or retrograde in future, or should remain in a state of chronic languor. The increase during the past ten years had been the reaction from the previous period of loss. Methodism had been declining from a condition of large increase, by steps of increase successively smaller, until it came to a decrease. This we had laid to heart, and a small increase had since been secured, which perhaps lightened too rapidly the burden of anxiety the connexion had begun to feel, and led us to imagine too hastily that all was well. The history of the last few years revealed a chronic weakness, and a true and frank acknowledgment of the want of adequate results was necessary if we were to prosper in future. Our material prosperity was pointed to—our multiplied chapels and day-schools, our advancing financial resources, the increased intelligence of our ministers; but in his opinion all this told powerfully in the opposite direction. For in proportion to our improvement in these things, our increase ought to be beyond the increase of former times, when greater hindrances stood in the way. There were also special circumstances operating against us. Small causes might exercise a real and important influence. The maintenance of godly discipline was as vital to the welfare of the Church of Christ as the maintenance of pure doctrine. He would mention three points—Preaching, Social Influence and Discipline, using that term in its widest sense. As to Preaching, he had met during the last three years with many young men whose hearts were in their work, and he admired the self-forgetting character of their preaching. Still, on the whole, there was failure in the method of preaching. Dr. Rigg here strongly condemned the use of ordinary lectures of notes, and the practice of reading sermons. He regretted that at a time when other churches were casting off their weaknesses, we should be content to lose our ancient peculiarity and strength, by descending to the feebleness of notes. As to social intercourse there were Wesleyans who had become rich, but had made no corresponding advance in intelligence and refinement. With these there was danger, lest hours should be spent in frivolous occupation which might be better employed, and that ministers should while away time at such houses in feeble imitation of fashionable amusements. Careful and kindly fidelity was

needed, on the part of ministers, to do their duty to people of this class. On the question of Discipline, Dr. Rigg alluded to various points on which he believed it had been relaxed; and advised greater strictness. If class meetings and love feasts were not maintained in their integrity, Methodism was at an end. In conversation lately with an eminent Congregationalist minister, that gentleman remarked that the class meeting was the best thing about the Wesleyan system; and it was sad, when others spoke in this way, that even the shadow of disparagement should be cast on the institution by any amongst ourselves. Let us maintain our discipline strictly and lovingly, and we shall have no cause to fear.

"LIBERAL REMUNERATION."—The other day a Wesleyan minister, who is not taking a Circuit next year, saw an advertisement stating that the services of a supernumerary were required in a country circuit, and that there would be "liberal remuneration." He wrote for particulars, and received the following letter:—

"Dear Sir, This is an improving watering-place, the scenery very romantic in the beautiful valley of — and in the — Circuit. We have a small chapel and about 30 or 40 members in society, but in the season the chapel is crowded, and we greatly require a new chapel. We want a Sunday school, not having had one for several years, is about — miles from —; the village itself is small, say perhaps 1,000 souls. It is — miles from —; a railway to it is scarce need say we want a Minister well up in chapel building, and being a watering-place, we might get some thing from —; the remainder of the money we should have to get where we could. No doubt the President would grant us a dispensation if applied for. Now for the practical part; we are prepared to give, say £25 or £30 for one year, but we have no house, though one might turn up to let in a few months, but there is not one at present. £30 without a house is what we offer. You will be able to gather the kind of man we want. We shall treat it as a business transaction; therefore if you think it anything in your way, shall require references from former Superintendents."

Every man ought to endeavour to shield others from the evil he has experienced himself.

Men and actions, like objects of sight, have their points of perspective—some must be seen at a distance.

Correspondence.

OUR FOREIGN MISSION.

Dear Brother Selden.— On my return home from Convention last evening, I received a letter from Bro. Crawley, dated Henthada, May 30th, 1866, containing the following statement from Rev. A. T. Rose, of Rangoon, under whose immediate supervision one of our native missionaries is laboring. As it did not arrive in time for insertion in the Report of the Board, please publish it in C. M. as soon as may be convenient.

Your's as ever, C. TUPPER, Secretary, Aylesford, August 25th, 1866.

REPORT.

Moung Thu Lau is an unmarried man of 28 or 30 years, of good natural abilities, and, for a Burman, well educated, i. e. according to the Burmese way and idea of education. He has been in the Kyoungs (monasteries) from boyhood, and, for six years, a priest. It is only about three years since he was baptized, and he has been with me nearly all the time since. He is a man of more than usual energy of character. He has been with me constantly while travelling the past year, and I consider him a very valuable assistant. He is fond of studying the Scriptures, and, I think, loves to pray, and is quick to confess his faults. He is ready and able in an argument with the heathen.

I am much obliged to the friends in Nova Scotia for the 15 Rupees, per month, for his support.

A. T. ROSE.

For the Christian Messenger.

DEAR EDITOR,—

Having listened with a good deal of interest to remarks that passed at the recent Convention at St. John, with regard to the necessary expenses of a family at Wolfville, and having some experience about that matter, I, on returning home, made an estimate of what I regard as the actual expenses of my family of eight persons, unless I should withhold from them what are commonly considered as necessities of life, and find the whole amount to be \$1229.30 as appears below.

If you should think proper to publish the statement, I should feel obliged to any of our brethren to point out any thing they deem an

error, or exorbitant charge; and if they cannot materially alter the amount, I would ask whether we can possibly expect to retain the services of any man of distinguished science or ability at our Educational Institutions, at the paltry salary of \$800 a year.

At the above rate, a family of six persons, I find would spend \$1022.96. Of course many items remain unchanged as House Rent, &c.

Yours &c., LOUKKEEPER, Horton, August, 1866.

Necessary expenses of a family of eight persons at Horton, N.S. House Rent.....\$125 00 Pew Rent..... 10 00 Taxes..... 10 00 Meat, 4 for each daily is 1460 lbs. a year, averaging from 7c to 15c. say 10c. 146 00 Flour, 8 bbls. at \$9.50..... 76 00 Milk, 2 quarts a day, at 50c..... 38 00 1 Bbl Corn Meal, \$5.75..... 5 75 Sugar, 360 lbs. at 10c..... 36 00 Butter, 5 lbs. a week, averaging 22c..... 93 60 Soap, 60 lb. at 5c..... 3 00 Potatoes or 6-ber vegetables, 1 1/2 bushels a week, at 40c..... 12 75 Stationery and postage..... 15 00 Sundries..... 15 00 Travelling..... 50 00 Wear and Tear of \$600 worth Furniture at 10 per cent..... 60 00 Clothes of 7 persons say \$55 each..... 385 00 Books, say \$20..... 20 00 Wood, 30 cords, at \$2.50—\$75. Cutting do. at 75c—\$22 50..... 97 50 Light, 1 Gallon Oil, 3 weeks at 75c..... 12 75 \$1229 30

For the Christian Messenger.

DEAR BROTHER,—

The accompanying lines were written by a child in a very humble dwelling in one of the obscurest corners of North Queens. This child lost four little brothers and sisters within a few days of each other last winter, by that dreadful scourge, diphtheria. They died trusting in the Lord. The mother of these children is a dear sister of mine. She had lost two children previously, and now with mournful pleasure tells that she has six loved ones in heaven. A world not trouble you with private griefs, but we have many relatives who will feel an interest in the lines. And the circumstances may touch the heart of many who have experienced similar bereavements. I copy it as it came from her pen. It needs no correction from me, it is entitled

"Our loved Ones in Heaven."

Gone before us are our loved ones, To that brightly radiant shore; Where the chilling blasts of sorrow, Circle round their hearts no more. Sadly here on earth we miss them, From the place that gave them birth, And their once filled seats now vacant, Leave a shadow by our hearth. First our trail and lovely Hannah, Death set his dark seal upon, And we knew with hearts of sorrow, That her earthly course was run. But her Saviour was her guardian, Through the dark and lovely shade, And as soft as downy pillow, His rich grace her death bed made. Next our little baby brother, Smiling cherub while on earth, Crossed the dark and foaming river, Entered on a heavenly birth. Yet again the fell destroyer, Sought our little household band, And our pet, our youngest sister, Left us for a better land. Then we thought our cup of sorrow, From the brim had overflowed, But awaited us a trial, Heavier than we yet had known. For our greatest earthly comfort, And our father's only stay, Darling Thomas from our circle, Was by angels called away. As the calm and mystic hour, When the world in slumbers lies, And was heard the chime of midnight, We were called to see him die. So we laid him in the grave-yard, By the other five* that died, And on green and lovely hillock, Rest their bodies side by side. And we know they now are landed, Safe within a glorious loce, Thomas, Hannah, Eva, Frankie, See their Saviour take to face. SURE R.

*Two had died some years before. If you think the above worthy of a place in the Christian Messenger, you will oblige by inserting it. Yrs truly, D. FREEMAN, Canning, July 20th, 1866.