

## The Baptist Anniversaries in London.

## BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

The Sixty-second Annual Meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society was held at Exeter hall, on Thursday last. The chair was taken at eleven o'clock by Samuel Morton Peto, Esq., M. P., one of the Treasurers of the Society. Among the ministers and gentlemen on the platform, we observed, W. B. Gurney, Esq.; H. Kelsall, Esq.; S. Leonard, Esq.; J. L. Benham, Esq.; Geo. Stevenson, Esq.; J. Marshman, Esq.; J. Burnett, Esq.; Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel; Drs. Steane, Hoby, Angus, Acworth; Revs. J. H. Hinton, J. Watson, F. Wills, T. Winter, J. Leechman, J. New, J. Aldis, G. Pearce, W. Brock, W. Groser, E. Carey, S. Brawn, F. W. Gotch, J. M. Soule, T. F. Newman, J. J. Davies, W. Landels, W. Aitchison, John Garrington, F. Manning, J. Sprigg, &c.

The proceedings were commenced with singing, and prayer, by the Rev. E. PROBERT.

The CHAIRMAN then rose and said: My dear Christian friends,—I feel that all apology is due from me for having, as an officer of the Society, taken the chair two years in succession. I am not, however, prepared to cast any blame upon the Committee, because the applications they made to other friends resulted in disappointment; and, of course, at the eleventh hour, I felt, as I hope I always shall feel, that it is only for the Society to ask, and for me to render any service in my power. (Applause.) But I must confess that I had hoped that on this occasion, the chair would have been taken by a large and warm-hearted evangelical Churchman. (Hear, hear.) In the earlier days of our Society, we had the co-operation of many of these excellent men; and although at the present time we cannot expect that their pecuniary aid should be diverted from their own denomination, yet we do feel that when they come among us, and we go among them, the strangeness which isolation produces is altogether lost in the contemplation of those great themes on which we all agree. (Hear, hear.) The only consolation to myself with regard to the friend to whom I especially refer, the Hon. Arthur Kinnaid, is this—that our good friends of our sister the London Missionary Society—for we always look upon that Society as a sister, although we are perhaps the little sister,—had been beforehand, and he had given his consent to take the Chair for them. (Hear, hear.) Although I rejoice in this on their own account, I regret it on our own. I do feel that we often lose very much, because we do not cultivate sufficiently, either as societies or as individuals, the friendship of those who differ from us in some things; and I must say, that almost the only good thing I have ever obtained from my connexion with the House of Commons has been this,—it has opened my heart to the friendship of very many men who differ widely from me on many points, but who agree with me in the main, and whom I can esteem as much as if they were members of my own denomination. (Applause.) I happen to have in my possession a volume of original letters of Wilberforce, one of which, if you will allow me, I will read to you, hoping it will give you as much pleasure as it did me in its perusal. It is dated from Barham Court, Dec. 20, 1814, and is addressed to the late Dr. Ryland.

"I must indulge the strong disposition I feel to thank you for your last friendly letter, and to express the cordial gratification with which I welcome, and I trust I can truly say I return, your catholic, Christian sentiments and feelings. I cannot tell you how much I delighted in them. They seem to unite us more closely than if our opinions were on all points the same; for I cannot think that those things about which Churchmen and Dissenters differ are in themselves of any essential value. I rejoice to hear of your success in India. O that God may prosper still more and more abundantly, the labours of all your ministers. But I must break off, being much pressed for time."

The effect of all this Christian union is felt in a very remarkable way in the operations of our mission. I would refer in the first place to the co-operation of the Society of Friends; and I take this first public opportunity of expressing my high esteem and regard, and my thanks as one of the Treasurers of this Society, to the Voluntary School Association, and especially to its estimable Treasurer, Mr. Alexander, for the cordial sympathy which they have shown to all our Missionaries, and the very great and effectual aid they have given

by their contributions to our various schools, particularly in Jamaica, where the work of education is peculiarly important, as it is also in India. And here I would refer for a moment to the subject of female education in India. (Hear, hear.) It is calculated, that out of 15,000,000 of females in Bengal alone, only 2,000 have any education at all; and when you reflect upon the importance of the mother educating the child, I am sure you will agree with me that this is a theme which cannot impress your minds too much, and upon which your liberality cannot be too largely exercised. (Applause.) Without anticipating anything the Report may say, I would just advert to two or three points in the past year's operations. We have had our attention largely occupied upon the translation of the Scriptures, feeling that it is a work which we cannot prosecute too largely; and we find that in Africa itself those translations begun by Mr. Merrick and the other Missionaries there, continued also by our devoted agent, Mr. Saker, are in a language which, in the first instance, was supposed to be limited to the western coast, but is now found to be spoken from the west coast to the east; so that those Scriptures can be circulated to an extent of which we formerly had no idea. (Applause.) Then, again, how interesting is the fact, when this country is engaging for the defence of a weaker power in the East, that translations in the Armenian language, prepared at Calcutta, are rendered available in Constantinople, and that the circulation of the Scriptures in that language has been begun, and is most acceptable to the people! (Applause.) Several native churches during the past year have declared themselves independent; and, knowing as we do, that we may look to those churches as the nucleus of light for spreading Gospel truth around, how greatly rejoicing is this simple fact! And with regard to the native pastorate, the institution at Calabar has shown in its progress how much lies upon us to do more than we have ever done in this respect. (Hear, hear.) I take this opportunity to express, on the part of my excellent co-treasurer and myself, and the committee at large, our gratitude to the churches who have responded to the appeal made in reference to the additional Missionaries for India; and we only hope that those towns, and there are some large ones, which have not responded at all, will feel an emulation from those who have contributed liberally, and that we may have large stores brought from all parts into the treasure-house of the Lord, to help forward this noble work. (Applause.) It is true, dear Christian friends, it may be said of Missions, that the day of excitement has gone. You will all, no doubt, recollect that when the Serampore premises were destroyed, and the press burnt, how largely the contributions of the British churches flowed into the treasury of the Lord, and when William Knibb, from this very platform, brought before them the position of the British slave, how large a sympathy was excited, and how liberal were the contributions in consequence! But, though we have none of this excitement now, I feel that it is left for the churches to appreciate the basis of Christian action, upon which alone any durable effort can proceed, that the pastors, deacons, and churches throughout this country should realize their own positions as living sacrifices, and should consider whether they can calmly and prayerfully reflect upon the great work in India without doing very much more than has ever yet been done. (Applause.) It has fallen to my lot lately to read with very great interest all the early correspondence between William Carey and the Mission-house, and especially with Dr. Ryland. The effect on my mind in perusing them is, that all the early successes of Carey and the successes of this Mission arose from one simple fact, that it is only from communion with God the believer gathers his most powerful motives to a course of holy service; and that it is only when individuals and churches appreciate their responsibilities in the sight of God, and act up to them with a single, hearty desire to do the Lord's will, that the Lord grants his blessing, and that your Missions prosper. (Applause.) I rejoice, then, dear Christian friends, that there is no excitement about this matter, but that we are left to struggle with our own sense of duty, and, as praying, humble Christians, to realise our position in the sight of God; and I am content, with my beloved co-treasurer to leave the matter here, feeling persuaded that when you realise your responsibilities you will act up to them, and that a large blessing will de-

scend, so that the little one will become a thousand, and we shall meet here to rejoice in the great things that God has done for us. (Applause.)

The Rev. F. TRESTRAIL, one of the Secretaries, then read the Report of the Committee.

Mr. E. B. UNDERHILL read the Balance-sheet, from which it appeared that the income of the Society for the year was £24,759 12s 9d, and the expenditure £21,738 4s 10d. An outstanding debt, however, amounting to £1,813 0s 5d, which had been paid off, reduced the balance, in favour of the Society, to £1,208 7s 6d. Of the East India Cholera Fund there is £348 6s 7d in hand.

The Hon. and Rev. B. W. NOEL then addressed the meeting upon the topic of "India as a Mission Field." He said: In what you have heard already, my Christian friends, I am persuaded that motives enough have been suggested to prompt your untiring zeal in the cause of British India; but those remarks have not been sufficiently exact with reference to the subject now before us to show with sufficient vividness and distinctness what is the character of that country, or rather, of that family of nations which is included in British India. It is not enough to say that the idolatry of the Old and of the New Testament was precisely like that of Hindostan. The idolatry of India is worse. The gods of Greece and Rome had at least human features; they were made from the model of men who were of mingled passions like ourselves; but among the three hundred millions of the gods of India, affecting the character of their worshippers, there is not one which represents a virtue—not one which is not a monster of iniquity. Why do the Hindoos scarcely ever worship their chief god Brahma? It is because he is reckoned too bad to be worshipped, and the gods, by consent, determined that he should not. Their god Sheva has, as its prevailing characteristic, revenge and malignity; the character of Krishna is notoriously that of a licentious profligate; their great god Juggernaut, is represented by an idol without legs or arms, because the legs and arms of the god were cut off by a sentence of the gods for his incurable iniquity. Now, if these are the principal deities of India, what but impurity and cruelty can be the result of a religion which has such patrons in its gods. Their priests are just such men as we may find among those who have borne the Christian name; but, happily, with exceeding rarity. Imagine a religion, all of whose priests should be like Alexander VI. or Sextus IV. or Julius III. or some of those monsters of iniquity who have outdone the very Emperors of Rome in their cruelty and their wickedness. Such are the Brahmins of India, the priests that model and form the national character. If you ask how are they instructed in morals by their sacred books, I can say with truth, that those sacred books contain tales, sacred tales, worse than the worst novel of the worst novel-writer in infidel France; and thus all their views of goodness and truth are unhappily perverted. If you ask a Hindoo what holiness means, he will point you to men in whom you will see that holiness, as personified in them, consists in the abandonment of every social duty, in covering the body with filth, and leaving the mind to absolute inertness. While God has made men to be brothers, and to be associated as brothers, aiding one another in bearing the sorrows and the toils of life, the religion of India has pronounced one class, sprung from the breast or head of the Deity, to be for ever supreme, and another class to be for ever degraded. The Shudra, whatever his virtues or his talents, must never rise to the condition of the Brahmin; caste places an insuperable barrier between them,—the Brahmin must ever be the lord, and the Shudra must ever be the slave,—and while the lower classes of India are in this condition, the female, instead of being protected, as, from being made weaker than man, she was intended to be, is degraded and crushed; and the children are entirely neglected. Infidelity is now spreading rapidly in India, and this is a new claim which it has upon our sympathies. Let but the Gospel penetrate the homes and the hearts of the population, and they would be raised as much as the negroes of Jamaica have been raised in the scale of human existence; their homes would be rendered peaceful and happy, their women would be honoured and respected, their children well trained, and India would be worthy of England, as its ally and its sister. Formerly, there were laws in existence in India opposed to the introduction of Christianity, but these laws have happily been abo-

lished, and the opposition is changed into decided friendship, the Government being now well aware that the strength of the British connexion with India is materially increased by every convert that is made to Christianity. Formerly the vices of Europeans served only to cast discredit upon the religion of Christ, and added to the neglect of it by the idolater; in this respect, a vast change has taken place, and many of our Missionaries have been most materially aided and strengthened by the example and friendship and the contributions of private civilians and officers. To this let me add, that a few years since all legal proceedings and all proceedings of a diplomatic kind were in the native languages, and, therefore, there was no inducement to the natives to study English; the Government spent annually a lac of rupees in teaching them Sanscrit and Persian, which made them more bigotted Mohammedans and more bigotted Hindoos; but now the Government has originated numbers of English schools, a great change has taken place in the transacting of business, and it becomes the interest of intelligent young men in India to study English; and as soon as they become acquainted with the English literature it destroys all their lying legends and superstitions. Science is doing the same thing. There is no acquaintance with real knowledge that does not make a Hindoo necessarily a sceptic to his own faith. The association of Hindoos with Englishmen is still further carrying on the same work. They cannot be associated with the English without endangering the loss of caste. If a Brahmin handles a dissecting knife, he loses caste; if he becomes a professor of medicine, or even drinks a glass of pale ale, he loses caste. They are doing this, however, constantly—many of them in secret; and there are thousands of intelligent Hindoo youths in India who know that they have forfeited caste, and they begin to feel, though they may not always avow it, the intolerable burden of the position in which they are placed. If caste has been one great hindrance to the spread of the Gospel, and the elevation of the working classes in India, that is being daily undermined; but still more important preparatory works are taking place.

When the first Missionaries went to India, there were no preparatory school-books of any kind, there was no Christian tracts written to give a summary of the faith. The Bible was unknown. Preachers might proclaim the great truths of our religion, but they had no book of authority to sanction their statements. Every nation in India has now a translation of the Word of God, and every part of India is filled with tracts disseminated by Missionaries and their agents. School-books have been compiled for their instruction, and all this is a preparation for further and more vigorous attacks upon native superstitions and vices. (Hear, hear.) Enough then, has been done to justify us in continuing the exertions we have already made. Who would be disposed to stultify our past efforts by saying, "We have expended so much on these preparatory exertions, and now when we see our way to success we will stop?" Or who would throw contempt on the self-denying labours of the excellent men who have gone before, just when their successors are beginning to reap the fruits of that harvest for which they so arduously sowed? (Applause.) That preparedness of the field, as Mr. Manning called it, will justify you in any self-denial which you may have exercised in contributing to these results, and any interests you may feel in their further prosecution. But the object of all these efforts is conversion, and we are not without proofs of God's blessing in this respect. Conversion is God's work; and wherever it takes place as the result of prayerful, arduous efforts on the one hand, and a disposition to listen on the other, then you may see that God has set the seal of his blessing to the work of his servants. Though the converts may only amount to a few thousands, yet they are sufficient in number to hold up a specimen of what real religion is to the millions of Bengal and India. Conversions have taken place in every class, from the Brahmin to the pariah men even sacrificing their rank and their property in order to profess Christianity. In all Missions, I believe, the great task has been to bring a few at first to listen to the Gospel. That task has, by the blessing of God, been accomplished. Savage tribes have seen that the Gospel was not only true for us, but was also adapted to them; and when they have seen their own countrymen loving and preaching the Gospel, numbers have been converted