

THE
UNITARIAN FUND REGISTER.

No. II.

Anniversary.—Extracts from Mr. WRIGHT'S Correspondence.—Letter from W. ROBERTS, Madras.

THE Annual Meeting of the Subscribers and Friends of the Unitarian Fund will be held on Wednesday, May 21, at Parliament-Court Chapel, when a Sermon will be delivered by the Rev. H. ACTON, of Walthamstow—the Rev. J. GILCHRIST, who was appointed to preach, having declined on account of the state of his health. Service to commence at Eleven o'clock. At the conclusion of divine service, the business of the Society will be transacted.

The Dinner will be at the London Tavern, Bishopsgate Street, at Half-past Four o'clock precisely. Tickets, price 8s. each, may be had at the bar of the Tavern, of the Collector, Mr. C. Fox, 33, Threadneedle Street, and of the following Gentlemen, who have engaged to officiate as Stewards :

Mr. ARNOLD, 135, *Aldersgate Street.*

BLOOR, 5, *Clifton Place, Hackney.*

H. BOWRING, *Mincing Lane.*

COLSON, *Clapton.*

DEMPSEY, *Bouverie Street.*

E. EVANS, 12, *Bishopsgate Street.*

FORD, 14, *Bartlett's Buildings.*

W. IMESON, 213, *Shoreditch.*

T. MARDEN, *St. John's Square.*

J. TOOKE, *Ditto.*

During the autumn of last year Mr. Wright was occupied in a Missionary Journey, extending to the following places :

In *Staffordshire*, Newcastle, Hanley, Red Street.

In *Shropshire*, *Whitchurch.*

In *Cheshire*, Nantwich, Reaseheath, Wybunbury, Audlem, Hurleston, Chester, Delamere.

In *North Wales*, Wrexham, Cefn-Mawr.

In *Lancashire*, Liverpool, Prescott, St. Helens, Park Lane, Wigan, Hindley, Preston, Houghton Tower, Mellor, Waterloo, Leigh, Astley, Swinton.

Arlom's-o'-th'-Height, Bolton, Newchurch, Rawtistall, Haslingdon, Padiham, Rochdale, Wardleworth Brow, Todmorden, Middleton, Greengate, Chancery Lane.

As Mr. Wright pursued nearly the same course in the preceding year, the following extracts from his Journal are all that the Committee deem it necessary to lay before the Subscribers. Some of them are selected on account of their relation to objects towards which it is desirable to direct the benevolent attention of the Unitarian public.

“ This journey employed me nearly three months, during which time I travelled 936 miles, preached 61 times, administered the Lord's Supper twice, and attended various other Meetings. It was one of the most laborious and successful that I have ever performed; in the course of it I had the happiness of witnessing, in several places, the effects of my labours during the preceding summer in various parts of the same district, and of observing the rapid progress the cause had made in the last twelve months, which is certainly greater than I had ever before known it to make in any one year.

“ *Hanley.*

“ This is an interesting station for the establishment of the Unitarian cause, being itself a populous town, still rapidly increasing in population, and situated in the centre of the Potteries. As large a congregation is already collected as the place of meeting will admit of; a number of persons appear to be well informed in the Unitarian doctrine, and to be an honour to the profession of it. Much has been done, considering the shortness of the time which Mr. Cooper has resided among them. I preached at Hanley three times to large congregations.

“ I had much conversation with the friends respecting the erection of a chapel at Hanley, which appears to be absolutely necessary to the firm establishment and furtherance of the cause there and in the Potteries at large. Before I left, I attended a meeting of the friends to consider and digest the plan of building a chapel. I am happy the matter was fully determined on, and have no doubt but that those who have the management of the business will proceed with economy and prudence, and that, when the chapel is finished, the congregation will much increase.

“ There is every thing to encourage the Unitarian public to patronize this object. The situation and populousness of Hanley and the neighbourhood around; what has been already done in the cause there in a short time; the pledge which the friends at Hanley and Newcastle have given, by their exertions in the cause, and liberal contributions towards a chapel, that if one be erected, they will not fail in their steady endeavours to promote Unitarianism, and render it successful; the well known character of Mr. Cooper, the steady exertions he has made and is making, the respect he has excited, and the success which has already attended his labours; all these things, it is hoped, will have their due weight with the Unitarian public, and induce them to subscribe liberally towards the erection of a chapel at Hanley, which will be a temple for the worship of the One God the Father, in a populous district, in which, till lately, his exclusive worship was unknown and unpatronized. From Hanley and Newcastle, the pure doctrines of the gospel and Christian liberality may be diffused over extensive tracts of country, now enveloped in the darkness of reputed orthodoxy, and where the minds of men are fettered by human creeds, illiberality, and bigotry.”

“ *Audlem,*

“ A village, seven miles from Nantwich. Here I preached in the open air to a large congregation. When I had done, a Methodist preacher stepped forward and said, ‘ I also came here to preach, and I shall preach;

but I shall not take any particular subject, but address you on the strange doctrines you have heard to-night.' On this I went and stood by the side of him. He began with a direct attack on Unitarians and their doctrine; but, before he had gone on many minutes, fell into gross misrepresentation. On this I stepped forward and said: 'I am sorry to interrupt the good man at my right hand; but as I came here in hostility to no man, nor party of men, but simply to state what I believe to be the truth of the gospel, which I have done plainly, without shewing any hostility to other parties, I cannot remain silent when I hear our views grossly misrepresented and false charges openly alleged against us.' I then explained the Unitarian doctrine so far as was necessary to set aside his misrepresentation. Having done this I stopped, and he went on; but it was not long before I had to stop him again, in consequence of the false statements he was giving. Thus we went on alternately for a considerable time; till at length he closed the meeting in the usual way. I throughout confined myself to explaining our views, and interrupted him only so far as was necessary to refute his false charges and misrepresentations. We had a large crowd of people together; among whom, I was told, was the clergyman of the village. At the close of the business, a young man, a local preacher, who was with us from Nantwich, gave notice that he would be there again on the following Sunday morning, to deliver a discourse on the doctrines for which the Methodist had contended that evening; and the Methodist gave notice that he also would be there to preach in reply when the other had done. I afterwards learned that my young friend, and some others with him, was there, and preached as he had engaged to do; but the Methodist did not appear."

Delamere,

"On the borders of the forest. Here I preached once, in a private house, to an attentive audience. It was many years since I had visited the little Unitarian flock in this neighbourhood. It is known that the Calvinists drove them from the little chapel in which they used to assemble at Kingsley. They are about to build another: Mr. Astbury, their preacher, a poor working man, gives them the ground to build on, and it is hoped they will receive assistance from their more opulent brethren. It gave me pleasure to renew my intercourse with them."

St. Helens.

"When I was in Lancashire last year, I was anxious to preach in St. Helens, which is now very populous; but no room could be obtained for the purpose. Since that time a room has been procured, and a Sunday evening service is carried on regularly. I preached here once to a large audience."

Park Lane.

"I have reason to think my preaching here last year was of considerable use. The congregation had for years been very low, and on that occasion the old chapel was crowded. Lectures have since been preached there, and the congregation seems to be much improved. I now preached there once, and had a large audience, considering it was in the time of harvest."

Wigan.

"I was prevented preaching in this town last year by the interference of the Mayor, a Calvinistic Dissenter, who threatened the vengeance of the law, because the room in which I should have preached was not registered. However, a room has since been procured and registered, and regular service is carried on in it, on a Monday evening. I preached here once to a crowded audience. Both Wigan and St. Helens were to me new ground."

Houghton Tower.

"In this village there is now a congregation of Unitarians. Its origin is rather singular. A man who was at Preston market, saw an auctioneer put up a volume of Discourses; being a Methodist, he thought, as the name of

the author was not mentioned, it might be one of Wesley's or Whitfield's, or some writer of that class; consequently he bade for and bought it; when lo! it was one of the volumes I published. He read it, and became an Unitarian. He lent it to one and another of his neighbours, and they also became Unitarians. Last year, when in Lancashire, they came to hear me at Preston, and invited me to preach at Houghton Tower, which I accordingly did. They have now a room for Unitarian worship, and preaching in it when they can get supplies. After my arrival in Lancashire, I received a most affectionate letter from them, inviting me to visit them, and it concluded with their styling themselves my children. I spent a day with them, and they related a number of interesting particulars as to their religious inquiries, &c. I preached in the evening to a crowded audience."

" Astley,

"A village about ten miles from Manchester. Owing to a clergyman being imposed upon the parish against the wishes of the people, and carried into the church by military force, when his entrance was opposed by the parishioners, they, who were before High Churchmen, have abandoned the parish place of worship, and are now willing to listen to Dissenters. A young man, one of our local preachers, went to the village, and preached in the open air to a crowd of people. Mr. Harris went next, and was said to have had more than 1000 hearers. I followed, and, though the evening was unfavourable, and the time harvest, had a large congregation. It is hoped a congregation will be established in this village."

" Swinton.

"Here I preached to a full congregation, which has been raised by a young gentleman, a local preacher, of the name of Boardman. Swinton is four miles from Manchester."

" Arlom's-o'-th'-Height,

"Three miles from Manchester. Here I opened a place of worship for a newly-raised congregation, by a suitable discourse, &c. This congregation also had been raised by the labours of Mr. Boardman, who preached to them in the open air. After the opening, I supped with above forty persons, most of them working people, and the evening was spent in a very edifying manner."

" Padiham.

"In this populous village I preached twice to very large congregations: a great part of them in the open air, as the place of meeting would not contain them. A chapel is erecting at Padiham, and one was become absolutely necessary. The Unitarians in Padiham are all poor people; consequently, though they build on the most economical plan, it is not possible they should get through with the expense without the assistance of the more opulent brethren. I know of no case of the kind more deserving of the attention and patronage of the Unitarian public. The perseverance of the Padiham Unitarians, and their exertions in the cause, under the pressure of the many difficulties they have experienced, are admirable. The situation of Padiham, and the populousness of the district round, renders the firm establishment of the cause there highly important. There can be little doubt, but that if they be enabled to complete the chapel, a large regular congregation will soon be established at Padiham."

" Todmorden.

"I had the pleasure, four years ago, of originating the Unitarian congregation in this place. They have continued to increase. They have bought a piece of ground for a chapel and burial ground; and it is expected that, ere long, they will have a chapel erected, and a minister fixed among them. I preached three times to large audiences."

“ Middleton,

“ A populous manufacturing place, five miles and a half from Manchester. I was anxious to have preached in this town last year, but could not then find an opening. A room has since been opened, and worship is regularly carried on. I preached here to a crowded audience.”

“ During the whole of the journey, I preached in 39 places, in 18 of which I had never preached before. During the whole of the time since Whitsuntide, I have travelled in the service of the Fund more than 1200 miles. During my long journey my health was several times interrupted; once I lost my voice by preaching in the open air. I might have done more had my strength been equal to what it was formerly; however, I did what I could, and thank God that he enabled me to go through with the journey without breaking a single engagement which I had previously made; and I reckon the past summer among the most useful ones which I have spent as a Missionary.

“ A Committee having been formed in Manchester, for the establishment of a Fund for Missionary Preaching in the counties of Lancaster and Chester, soon after my arrival in Lancashire, I received a message from that Committee, through the medium of their secretary, Mr. Jones, of Bolton, requesting that I would visit the different places where rooms had been opened for Unitarian worship, or where attempts were making to introduce Unitarianism, and then meet the Committee, and report to them what places I thought they ought to take under their patronage, and give my opinion respecting any matters which I might think called for their attention as a Committee for a Missionary Fund, &c. With this request of the Manchester Committee I very readily complied. Accordingly, after having visited what places I could, I met the Committee, as had been previously arranged, in the rooms at Cross-Street Chapel, on Thursday, Sept. 5, and made my report to them respecting the different places which I had visited, that have not ministers, and are not capable of providing themselves with ministers; the places where there appear to be openings for preaching; such of the local preachers as I had been enabled to form a judgment of; my views of what may be done in the two counties; and such other matters as seemed to me important to state. I was much pleased with the candour and liberality of the Committee, the zeal they manifested in the cause, and the whole of their proceedings, which I had opportunity of witnessing. A Sub-committee was appointed to examine in detail the expenses which the carrying on the cause in different places will involve. The Manchester Committee consists of the ministers of the two counties, and some other gentlemen. If the plan now contemplated be fully carried into action, with united zeal and perseverance, great and most interesting effects may be expected to result from it.

“ My views and prospects respecting the success of the Unitarian cause in the North West, expressed in my papers communicated last year, have been confirmed by what has since taken place, and what I have observed during the late journey. Nothing is necessary but for all the friends of the cause to unite heart and hand, in the adoption of popular measures, in steady, zealous, and persevering exertions; and Unitarianism in a few years will be the preponderating system in Lancashire. There are already a number of zealous local preachers; young men of good sense, piety, and no mean talents; and it may be confidently hoped that their numbers will increase. In brief, the *people* are beginning to take the cause into their own hands, and to rely on their own exertions for its promotion; this will gain them the assistance of others.

“ This being the last long Missionary tour of which I am likely to have an account to give to the Committee, I cannot conclude these papers without expressing the sense I feel of the obligations I am under to the gentlemen who have formed the different Committees, for their advice, support, and countenance, in the different labours in which I have been engaged as a Mis-

tionary; and for which I beg the present Committee, for themselves and their predecessors in office, to accept my sincere thanks and fervent wishes for the success of all their valuable exertions in the cause."

This journey closed Mr. Wright's labours, as perpetual Missionary, in the service of the Unitarian Fund, he having in its progress tendered his resignation of that office on the ground of declining health and strength. Knowing, as the Committee did, that Mr. Wright had suffered much from over-exertion for some years; that the repetition of such efforts would probably be attended with painful and serious consequences; that his zeal in the cause of Truth, and his anxiety fully to discharge his engagements with the Fund, would constantly impel him to continue them; and that, by the melancholy event which deprived the congregation at Trowbridge of Mr. Gisburne's services, an opportunity offered for his settlement as a stated minister, where he could also be employed to a considerable extent and with eminent utility in Village Preaching, they could not but, with whatever regret and reluctance, accept his resignation. The following communication, subsequently received, will be read with deep interest.

"I cannot close my correspondence as a perpetual Missionary, without some strong emotions. I have had the honour of being connected with the Fund ever since it existed; and shall ever rejoice that I was one of its first Missionaries. I felt myself so united with the society which supported it, and the few talents I possessed so connected with its plans, that what related to the Fund, its interest, and success, seemed my own concern; all my powers and all I was capable of doing seemed to me its property. I had, before I felt any diminution of strength, hoped to live and die in its service. I never thought any exertion I was capable of making too great, nor any privations required worth much consideration, so that I might have the happiness of promoting its all-important objects. I felt thankful to God that he had made me capable of enduring more hardness, and of making more incessant exertion, than some men are capable of, and that he had so fully disposed me to the work. A few years ago I had no thought but that I should, if life was continued, be able to go on in the office of a perpetual Missionary for many years longer. But for three or four years past I have felt a gradual decay of strength, and each summer's labour has seemed to diminish what remained, and to take much from the short portion of life which remains to me in this world; until at length the conviction forced itself upon me that I was no longer the man I had been, either as to bodily strength or capability of mental exertion. I found I could not recover from fatigue, nor ward off the attacks of disease, as I had formerly done. I was compelled to admit to myself that either I must remit the incessant exertion I had been in the habit of making, sometimes for months together, or sink under it. Firmly persuaded that the objects of the Fund, in having a perpetual Missionary, could not long be pursued by me at any risk in the manner they ought; and that either I must go on without doing it fully to my own satisfaction, by making all the exertion I had been wont to make, or relinquish the office of a perpetual Missionary, I deemed the latter the most honourable course, and the best for the cause, and, after deep consideration, acted accordingly. I confess I was most reluctant to come to such conclusions; and cannot help feeling much regret at being incapable of going on in so honourable and pleasurable an office as I had formerly done. I must throw myself on the candour of the gentlemen of the Committee, and beg they will pardon one who has grown old and grey-headed in their service, while he on this occasion gives vent to his feelings, and lays them open before them. They may find Missionaries who have more learning and superior talents; but they will forgive my egotism in say-

ing, they will not find one who has the cause more at heart, who will serve them with more faithfulness and zeal, or who will more completely identify his feelings and interest with the objects of the Fund.

“ I wish distinctly and most respectfully to state, the deep sense I have of the obligations I am under to the Committee and Officers of the Fund, and to all the preceding Committees, and all who have acted in its concerns. I have ever received the most candid, considerate, and kind treatment from them. Their attention to any plans which I have had occasion to submit to them, has been most friendly and respectful. The manner in which from time to time they have been pleased to express their approbation of my labours and proceedings, has been truly affectionate and encouraging; and the countenance and support they have given me, and the confidence which they have throughout reposed in me, have been liberal and gratifying. In consequence of my connexion with them, and my being supported and countenanced by them, I have been able to do what I could not otherwise have attempted, and conceive that I owe to those things much of the consideration and respect I have obtained in different parts of the kingdom. The intercourse I have had with them has been most pleasing and edifying, and their advice and suggestions, from time to time, I have found to be salutary and of great advantage. For all their candour, kindness, attention, support, and countenance, I desire now most explicitly to offer them my sincere and warmest thanks. My fervent prayer to God, on whom all our success depends, is, that they may be guided by him in all their deliberations, and that he may crown their labours and plans with abundant success.”

Mr. W. gives the following account of his proceedings since his settlement at Trowbridge.

“ *Bradford.*

“ The old chapel in this town may now be considered as secured to us; though the Calvinists still have the loan of it on the latter part of the Sunday. In my settlement with the congregation at Trowbridge, I reserved the Sunday morning to myself, with a view to trying what could be done at Bradford. I have preached regularly at the latter town on a Sunday morning ever since I was fixed here: we have but a small congregation there, but a small one we have, and we may look forward to much ultimate good. This chapel is $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from my residence.

“ *Hilperton Marsh.*

“ Here I opened a house, occupied by a poor man, for a Tuesday evening Lecture, in the early part of the winter, and have kept up the service regularly. At first we had few hearers; latterly the room in which I preach has been well filled, sometimes crowded.

“ Have made inquiries at *Frome*; there are a very few Unitarians in that town; but no place can be got for preaching; nothing at present seems practicable there.

“ *Westbury,*

“ A borough town, six miles from Trowbridge. In this place there is a society, called by their neighbours, New Lights. They have given up the Trinity, but retain most of the other parts of reputed orthodoxy; however, they admit that reason ought to be used upon all religious subjects. I have begun an acquaintance with them, and have made them one visit, and have also distributed a number of Unitarian tracts among them. They are very serious, pious, and of good character.

“ I have distributed a great number of tracts in Trowbridge, and the neighbouring towns and villages, since I came here. They are, I find, read much more than I had previously expected. The Methodists carry tracts round to people's houses every Sunday, and I have thought it right to furnish my friends with tracts to lead them in turn.”

To the Rev. W. J. Fox, Secretary to the Unitarian Fund.

Madras, December 13, 1822.

REVEREND SIR,

IN my second Letter to you, dated 25th August last, I have enclosed a tract, containing Questions to Trinitarians, with two small dialogues taken from the *Christian Reformer*. In that letter I have given you an account of the two sums of money that I received from Dr. T. Rees and yourself, and how it was applied, and what was remaining in my hands at that time; and also informed you, that our Prayer Book was then in the press, and as far as half of the Evening Service was printed off. Now, by the blessing of God, and by the encouragement of our respectable English Unitarian friends, the whole is printed except the last sheet, which will be out of the press in two or three days. Besides the Catechism and Hymns which accompany the Prayer Book, I have got printed separate, a second set, 250 copies of Catechism and Hymns for the use of our schools: these are a great acquisition in our present situation. And we beg leave to return our sincerely heartfelt thanks to our Reverend Friend, the first mover, indefatigable and firm encourager to this undertaking, the Rev. Thomas Belsham, and to the Unitarian Church at large, who have seconded his views in our favour. May the Lord God of Israel, whose mercy and providence extendeth over all his creation, bless and further all their godlike views; and may we poor Indians enjoy that pure light which we received by means of their indefatigable labours and liberality, in holding it up to all the world steadily.

My other writings for the press are, A Collection of Texts, containing the principal Doctrines and Duties of Religion; One Hundred and Fifteen Questions to the Roman Catholics; A Dialogue between an Idolist and a Worshipper of God; Heathenism Weighed, in verse and prose; Corruptions of Christianity, in verse and prose, in two parts, the First Part addressed to Trinitarian Protestants, and the Second Part to the Roman Catholics; The Worship of the Holy Scriptures contrasted with the Worship of the Church of England; A Dialogue between a Trinitarian and an Unitarian, on the principal Texts of Scripture, which are thought to support the Doctrine of the Trinity; and my Notes on the Gospels and Acts.

If my Unitarian friends, the friends of truth, will continue their aid in this laudable cause, and enable me to print and circulate these writings, I shall leave the evidences of Christianity in my language to my great satisfaction.

In your next communication, if possible, I should like to have the instruction of your Committee with respect to my printing and circulating to what extent I may venture.

With respect to money matters, I am now already indebted for the printing of our Liturgy, &c. above fifty pounds. My own circumstances and wants I have already informed you in my answer to your first letter, which I hope by this time is before my friends.

Mr. George Collins, a country-born young gentleman, whose religious progress and changes he himself has wrote to the Rev. T. Belsham, to Dr. T. Rees, and also to yourself, has offered to assist me with some money, without interest, on condition of my paying as soon as I receive any from you, rather than interrupt my printing business. I am thinking to accept his offer, and I take this opportunity of introducing Mr. Collins to our respectable friends. Mr. Collins has undertaken to forward a copy of our Liturgy to you on the first opportunity.

We have had abundance of rain this year, and, the weather being damp for long time, it does not agree with my weak constitution. I am confined within doors, but I hope with returning dry weather, I shall be well. My brethren are all pretty well, and every thing goes on quietly.

I remain, my Reverend Sir, in the name of the Native Unitarian Christians of Pursewaukum,

Your obedient Servant,

WILLIAM ROBERTS,
Near Lunatic Hospital, Pursewaukum, Madras.