

SHORT ACCOUNT
OF THE
ADULT SCHOOLS,
IN LEEDS,

SUPPORTED AND CONDUCTED BY THE

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,

INCLUDING THE

Substance of the Committees' Reports,

ISSUED FROM THE GENERAL MEETING,

Held the 14th of 5th Month, 1817;

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE SUBSCRIBERS AND OTHERS,
WHO MAY FEEL THEMSELVES INTERESTED IN SUCH
INSTITUTIONS.

LEEDS:

PRINTED BY B. DENNIST, 21, DOOR-LANE.

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Wm. G. Nichol.

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EARLY in the spring of 1816, some individuals of the Society of Friends, associated themselves together for the purpose of assisting the Adult Poor to read the Bible.—Whilst deliberating on the various means of promoting this end, it became a question whether it would be better to join the benevolent of all denominations, promote a general subscription, and open several schools; or, to try the experiment on a smaller scale, by funds raised among themselves, and by teachers from their own society. After mature consideration it was thought most prudent to adopt the latter

mode. A small subscription was accordingly set on foot, and school rooms engaged, one for men, and another for women learners. Hand-bills were circulated expressive of the design of the institution, and with the exertions of a few individuals, who had extensive acquaintance with the unlettered poor, both the schools were soon filled.

About three months after the commencement, a general meeting of the subscribers was convened, when such rules as were thought needful were agreed upon, for the regulation of the schools. A committee of men, and another of women friends, were appointed for one year, also a treasurer, who undertook to collect the subscriptions. A conductor for each of the schools was afterwards selected from the committees, and thus the establishment assumed a more regular form.

Rather more than a year has now elapsed since the opening of the schools, and the expectations of the managers have been more than realized. The zeal of several of the

teachers has become so warm, that they have voluntarily become constant teachers, instead of only teaching every other month, as was at first the case; and we trust the satisfaction which they have found in their labours, will operate as a stimulus to continued exertion.

The women's school room will hold about eighty, the men's rather more than sixty learners; these have been about the average numbers on the lists since the commencement.

About twenty-two learners have been dismissed, after having attained to a sufficient degree of proficiency. Several have left without having accomplished this desirable object. Of these, a few were discouraged, by finding it more difficult to learn than they at first expected; some were prevented by ill health, and others by want of suitable clothing. Such, however, as have persevered till they have been conscious of improvement, have shewn an increasing desire to make further progress. Many of them have become more regular in their

attendance, manifested in their general deportment an evident improvement, and evinced gratitude and affection for their teachers, and thankfulness towards the institution.

Perhaps we cannot better conclude this Report, than by inserting, with a few alterations, (chiefly verbal) an appropriate quotation from an interesting work on this subject, viz.

“ The age in which we live may be called with great propriety, the age of Christian benevolence. The spirit of philanthropy has indeed exerted itself in former periods, much to the advantage of the public : it has founded schools for the young, erected hospitals for the sick, and endowed alms-houses for the aged and infirm. These noble institutions render Britain the admiration of the world. But great and noble as they are in design, and no less beneficial in effect, their principal object is to ameliorate the condition of the poor as it respects the things of this life. We are happy, how-

ever, to find that, in the present age, while the temporal wants of the poor have by no means been neglected, the attention of the public has been very properly directed to the relief of their spiritual necessities. This disposition has been peculiarly manifested in the establishment of Sunday Schools, the distribution of religious tracts, and the formation of Bible Societies.—These are doubtless excellent institutions, and adapted to render important service to the community: but in order to carry their design fully into effect, especially as it relates to the last-mentioned societies, something more is necessary to be done. The benefit to be obtained from the distribution of the Scriptures, and of scriptural tracts, must be chiefly, if not wholly, confined to those who are able to read them. The Bible is indeed a storehouse of heavenly wisdom, a fountain of divine consolation; but to the unlearned it is a storehouse locked up, a fountain sealed.

“The liberal mind deviseth liberal things;

and it is highly gratifying to those who are thus employed, to see such repeated accessions to the means of doing good, and such multiplied opportunities of promoting the best interests of our fellow-creatures; inso-much that the establishment of one institution seems but an introduction to the formation of another, no less benevolent in its design, and useful in its tendency. Thus the extension of Sunday Schools creating an unprecedented demand for Bibles and Testaments, was the means, it is believed, of bringing into existence that noble institution, the British and Foreign Bible Society. Thus, also, the exertions of those who have laboured to extend the benefits of that institution, by the formation of auxiliary societies in every part of the kingdom, have made such discoveries of the ignorance, as well as of the wants of the poor, in respect to the possession of the scriptures, as evince the absolute necessity, and we hope will lead to the universal adoption of ADULT SCHOOLS, that persons

of mature age, as well as those who are yet young, may become acquainted with the means by which they may be made wise unto salvation.

“It has excited the most pungent sensations of grief in the breasts of those who have made the investigation above referred to, while visiting the poor at their own habitations for this purpose, to hear adult persons, and some of them advanced in years, confess that a Bible would be of no use to them, as they had never learned to read, not having possessed those advantages in early life, which children now so generally enjoy. Such instances of hoary ignorance have much affected the minds of the visitors, and led them to exclaim, Can nothing be done for these poor creatures who are tottering on the verge of eternity? Let us bring the question home to ourselves, and let it not terminate in idle wishes, but in active exertions for their benefit. It is true that, with respect to the youthful part of the community, much

is done in the various Sunday Schools, to which they can have such ready access; and the generation that is to come will doubtless derive abundant advantage from the exertions of the present, in these labours of love. But while we rejoice in such exertions on behalf of the *rising* generation, we ought not, surely, to be unmindful of the interests of the *sinking* generation. If our attention to the former is animated by hope, our regard to the latter should be excited by gratitude. They have certainly a claim upon us for services, not promised only, but actually performed for our benefit. They have cheerfully laboured for us in the lowest offices of life. The comforts which we enjoy have been procured by the sweat of their brow, and many of them have received no other recompence than that of a bare subsistence.

“ Let it be further considered, that we have a very little time in which to pay this debt of gratitude, or rather of justice, which we owe them. With respect to

many of them, the remaining term of their continuance here must be short indeed.

“If there are peculiar difficulties in the way of instructing the aged, there are peculiar encouragements also, and we ought to set the one over against the other.—Let us, then, remember, while engaged in this good work, that we are teaching those to read, who are capable of understanding what they read; we may hope, therefore, soon to see the fruit of our exertions in their spiritual improvement.

“*With respect to the mode of instruction.* As the great end in teaching adults, is to enable them to read the Scriptures, that method should certainly be preferred, by which intervening obstacles may be removed, and this end be most speedily and effectually attained. Now, it is well known, that one great impediment, by which many adults have been deterred from making the attempt, has been the difficulty of learning the alphabet, which, it has been conceived, they must be thoroughly

acquainted with, before they can read a single word. This they have generally been disposed to consider as extremely irksome and degrading, if not wholly impracticable, at their time of life. Thus they stumble at the very threshold. Of late, however, a plan has been devised, by which this difficulty is obviated. A number of short words, chiefly monosyllables, of common use and frequent recurrence, have been formed into easy lessons, and printed on a card. A selection is made from these words, (in which all the letters of the alphabet are comprised) and printed in capitals at the bottom of the card.— Thus the learner is insensibly made acquainted with the whole alphabet, both in large and small letters, having been taught in the course of his reading, by what names to call them. He will also have learned the powers of the letters, when combined together, as well as their respective names, which will much facilitate his progress.— When he is thoroughly master of the above

easy lessons, he may begin to read a chapter in the New Testament; when to his great surprize, he will find that more than half the words which commonly occur, are such as he is already acquainted with, having learned them on his card. Should this method be adopted, and found to answer the purpose, the expence of elementary books will be wholly superseded.*

“ In teaching adults, it may be proper to observe, that more teachers will be required in proportion to the number of pupils than with children, as more particular attention must be paid to each.

“ In the prosecution of this work, it will be found necessary, not only to open schools for adults, but to visit them in their own houses, to impress upon them a sense of the importance of the object, and by affectionate exhortation endeavour to re-

* “ For a further account of this plan we refer to ‘ A Method of teaching Adult Persons to read.’ By John Freeman; sold by W. Button, Paternoster-Row.” See also Dr. Pole’s interesting publications on this subject.

move that reluctance to be taught, which is too generally experienced by those who are old in ignorance.

“ Thus, by the union of combined effort, and individual exertion, may the leaven of sacred truth diffuse its influence till the whole mass of mankind shall be leavened thereby, and the long wished-for period arrive, when the blessings of salvation shall be universally enjoyed, and the knowledge of the Lord cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.”

The Committees for the ensuing year are
as follow, viz.

MEN'S COMMITTEE.

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Joseph Armistead,</i> | <i>Robert Arthington.</i> |
| <i>Jun.</i> | <i>John Jowitt.</i> |
| <i>Samuel Grimshaw.</i> | <i>Thomas Walker.</i> |
| <i>Jonathan Patchett.</i> | <i>William Marshall.</i> |
| <i>Newman Cash.</i> | |

WOMEN'S COMMITTEE.

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Esther Crewdson.</i> | <i>Hannah Walker.</i> |
| <i>Grace Jowitt, Jun.</i> | <i>Mary Witchell.</i> |
| <i>Mary Walker.</i> | <i>Sarah Armistead.</i> |
| <i>Elizabeth Whitlark.</i> | |

RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS.

From 3rd Month, 1815, to 5th Month, 1816.

NEWMAN CASH, TREASURER.

| <i>Dr. Cash.</i> | <i>Per contra.</i> | <i>Cr.</i> |
|--|--------------------|--|
| | <i>£. s. d.</i> | <i>£. s. d.</i> |
| To Subscriptions, &c. received, | 24 6 0 | |
| To Cash received for Adult School | | |
| Books sold, | 1 19 0 | |
| To Balance due to the Treasurer, | 2 7 1 | |
| | £28 12 1 | |
| | | £28 12 1 |
| | | By Bibles, Testaments, and other School Books, Printing and Stationary, 19 11 0 |
| | | By Rents of School Rooms, Expenses of Lighting, &c. &c. 9 1 1 |

JOSEPH ARMISTEAD, JUN: Auditor.

