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The Centenary of the Baptist Building Fund.

III.—THE BAPTIST CASE COMMITTEE.

THE London Society for assisting poor Baptist Churches in the Country, in building and repairing Meeting-houses," otherwise known as the "Baptist Case Committee," was formed in 1784, and functioned for a period of forty years. At first it was composed exclusively of laymen. Each of the Particular Baptist Churches in London annually appointed two of its members, usually Deacons, to serve, and at their first meeting the whole group selected "twelve gentlemen" from the various congregations to sit with them for the year. Later, when the Committee needed strengthening, this representation was altered to four from each of the churches, viz., the minister, two messengers elected by the church, and one other person, not necessarily a church member, who was elected by the contributors at the annual meeting in June. This meeting was generally held at the Committee rooms, which successively were at 22, Paternoster Row, and 18, Aldermanbury. Unfortunately, the Minute Books cannot be traced, and the historical sources available do not disclose the names of the laymen, except that for several years prior to the disbanding of the Committee, Eliezer Wilkinson, a deacon at Prescott Street, and one of the Fundees of the Particular Baptist Fund, was the Chairman, and Samuel Gale, another of the Fundees and a well-known Dissenting Deputy, was "the gratuitous Secretary and Solicitor."

The business of the Committee was "to investigate all the cases applying for help, and when approved to certify and authorise their appeal to individual donors in a regulated succession and an orderly manner."¹ In the investigation of a case, the objects stated to be chiefly in view were:

1. To prevent an improvident expenditure of money.
2. To see that the meeting-house was legally secured for the benefit of the Church.
3. To discountenance improper persons collecting money for approved cases.

¹ James Benham, treasurer of the Baptist Building Fund, in a paper read to the Lancashire and Cheshire Association at its meeting at Ogden on Wednesday, 12th June, 1867. A much-altered draft of this paper has been found in the archives at Furnival Street. In the preparation of it, the author had access to the missing Minute Books.

4. To lay down such regulations as might generally apply to the expenditure of the persons collecting, and to the safe remittance to the order of the Church of the money collected.
5. To give, as much as possible, combined facilities to those ministers who were employed in collecting for such cases as had been previously examined, approved, and recommended by their neighbouring brethren.

Determined to avoid the weaknesses that had characterised the earlier method associated with the Baptist Board, the Committee acted with vigour. Rules were formulated which, in course of time, became quite elaborate.² For many years, the personal attendance at a Committee meeting of a duly authorised representative of the country church, preferably the minister, was required. He was expected to answer "rigid and minute enquiries." The nature of these can be gathered from the particulars which were required in writing when subsequently the Committee found it possible to dispense with the personal attendance of the representative of the church. Among other things, the form then in use asked "the reasons for the erection, enlargement, or repair; the nature of the property, whether freehold, copyhold, or leasehold; the number of members forming the church; their profession of faith; the usual number of stated hearers; the amount of the whole expenditure, including purchase of the ground, erection, deeds, etc.; the amount collected by the church among themselves; the amount collected in other places; the balance due." Throughout its forty years, the Committee required "the recommendation of at least two ordained neighbouring ministers, in their own handwriting." And influenced by the statement in the preface to the form of Trust Deed published by the Dissenting Deputies, "that great mischief has in many churches been experienced, both from the imperfection of their Trust-Deeds, and from negligence in filling up the vacancies occasioned by the deaths of Trustees," the Committee also insisted on the production of the title deeds.³ These deeds were scrutinised with much care, and the Committee did not hesitate to insist that imperfections be rectified. Despite its vigilance, some cases were passed for collection whose deeds in after years were found imperfect. One of the rules read:

"That where there are not as many as five Trustees, the Committee will expect the Church to enlarge the number to at least nine persons, members of Churches, of the same faith

² The rules are printed in the *Baptist Magazine*, August, 1822. They formed the basis of the rules later adopted by the London Baptist Building Fund.

³ *Baptist Magazine*, October, 1820.

and order; and that it is indispensable in all cases, that the choice of new Trustees shall not be [vested] in the surviving Trustees, but shall be vested in the men members of the Church."

In the days when the personal attendance of the representative of the church was required, it appears to have been the practice for the decision, either to recommend or to reject the case, to be made forthwith. Later, when personal attendance was abolished, the Committee was more deliberate, the following rule being adopted:

"That no case shall be dismissed or determined upon immediately upon its presentation; but on its first reading, shall be referred to the consideration of a subsequent meeting of the Committee."

It is not surprising to learn that many of the cases failed to attain the standard required by the Committee. Those which passed were placed on a rota list "to be signed and sent on circuit in due course." The rejected cases caused difficulty. Expenses had been incurred in the visit to the Committee: the minister could hardly return to his people without having attempted a collection. The result was that, much to the resentment of Londoners, the ministers called on those subscribers whose names they could ascertain, and thus arose what were known as "unauthorised country cases." In passing, it may be mentioned that some country churches refrained from sending their minister to town, and did their collecting by post. The appeals of a few arrived in unstamped envelopes.⁴ Londoners protested, and more than one stated that he would not accept unstamped communications. The explanation of one church was somewhat naïve. It was, in effect: "We are collecting because we are poor, therefore we cannot afford to stamp our appeals. We are only asking for a guinea from each one to whom the communication is sent, and we quite understand that the double postage and the cost of remittance will be deducted by the sender from the guinea." Any condemnation of the morality of such an argument needs to be tempered by a remembrance of the poverty out of which the appeal arose.

When a case reached its turn for collection, the Committee's Secretary summoned the minister to town. He brought with him a certified copy of the resolution of the church authorising him to collect on its behalf, and on production of this, his case was signed and he was able to go forth with the imprimatur of the Committee. Usually the case was then taken to the ministers assembled at the Board Meeting for their signatures to be

⁴ See occasional letters in the early numbers of the *Baptist Magazine*.

appended, and in common parlance, the cases were still known as "Board Cases." This practice continued with intermittence to 25th April, 1820, when the Board "Resolved that our Secretary be requested to inform the Secretary of the Committee for examining country cases that it is not considered any part of the business of this body to sign Country cases but that Ministers will always be at perfect liberty to sign such cases in this room on their individual account."

The Committee retained a Guide for the purpose of conducting the country ministers through the highways and bye-ways of the city, and Benham tells us that this Guide was furnished with a list of names and addresses divided into two sections. The first section, comprising the good givers, was designated "the regular list"; the second, called "the by-list," was understood to comprise those who required substantial pressure before they parted with their money. One wonders whether the donors knew of the two lists. Could a subscriber in the "regular list" obtain transfer to the "by-list"? Would one in the latter category, feeling a sense of indignity, object that he was entitled to be classified as a "good giver"? Was regularity in giving the sole qualification for entry on the "regular list," or was the amount of the donation also a factor? Did the Guide's remuneration depend on results? In the absence of the Minute Books, these and other questions must remain unanswered. The Guide's list at one time must have been a tolerably full one, for some years after its preparation strong complaints were made that by deaths and removals it had dwindled to 276. Of those, 187 were classified among the more or less cheerful givers and 89 among those who found it easy to say, "Trouble me not . . . I cannot rise and give thee," but who added their mite if the minister's importunity were sufficiently prolonged.

One of the regulations of the Committee was :

"That the person who collects be desired once a week to deposit the money collected with the Secretary, who shall report to the Committee the amount he shall from time to time receive; and that the Church do draw upon the Secretary for the sum paid to him."

Another regulation required that the collecting be compressed into one month, at the end of which time the minister was under obligation to deliver up his book to the Committee's Secretary. Occasionally, in special circumstances and by special vote, an extended period was granted, but such extensions were not favoured by the donors, who desired "a little breathing time."

In the early days the Committee aimed at approving four cases yearly, and by the end of 1790, twenty-one cases had been sanctioned. This number was, however, inadequate. Rejuvena-

tion was taking place in the country, the fruits of the revival were being gathered, and many a country Nehemiah echoed the words of the old writer, "The God of Heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build." The appeals reached London in growing numbers and within a year of the formation of the Committee it became needful to institute a waiting list. Particulars of the first twenty-one cases are not available, but the following statement printed in Rippon's Annual Register for 1791 is illuminating :

AN ACCOUNT OF THE FOUR COUNTRY CASES
which were patronised in London, 1791.

Case.	Church at	Presented	Recommended	Wanted.	Collected.
No.				£ s. d.	£ s. d.
22	Carmarthen	Dec. 1, 1786	Mar. 4, 1791	100 0 0	86 1 0
23	Hooknorton	May 1, 1787	Jun. 3, 1791	150 0 0	75 0 0
24	Cranbrook	Jun. 1, 1787	Aug. 5, 1791	146 12 0	77 3 6
25	Spalding & Horbling	Oct. 5, 1787	Oct. 7, 1791	200 12 0	75 12 6

We observe at once the wide area from which the cases came—Wales, Oxford, Kent, and Lincoln—a reflection of the self-denying resolution passed by the subscribers that "all churches within five miles of the Standard on Cornhill shall be rigorously excluded and sternly discouraged." It is also worthy of notice that the waiting list had become so long that Carmarthen, although making application within two years of the formation of the Committee, was not recommended for a further period of over four years. Against this enforced delay the country churches were loud in their complaints. Some churches, doubting whether the Committee's authorisation was worth the severe scrutiny to which the cases were subjected and the protracted period of waiting that ensued, demanded the return of their papers and sent their collectors to London on their own responsibility. These added to the number of "unauthorised country cases," and caused controversy. In 1787 and again in 1798, earnest remonstrances were addressed by the Committee to the London ministers against their "encouragement of irregular cases by inviting their advocates to preach in their own pulpits." We have no information to enlighten us; it is therefore an interesting speculation as to how far the grave and reverend fathers of that day gave heed to the earnest exhortations of "the deacons and private Christians" who dared thus to address them.

In the succeeding five years, twenty-one cases were collected,⁵

⁵ See Rippon's *Registers*.

viz., 1792, Ogden £79; Moulton⁶ £88 8s. 0d.; Manchester £122 9s. 6d.; Beckington £81 14s. 0d.; 1793, Roe £89 15s. 6d.; Wootton-under-Edge £94 3s. 8d.; Moleston (amount not stated); Shipley £66 7s. 0d. 1794, Hertford £80; Bramley (amount not stated); Uckfield £60 7s. 0d.; Coseley £82 18s. 6d. 1795, Great Driffield £58; Bottesford £71 19s. 0d.; Dudley £79 0s. 6d.; Kingston £65 6s. 6d. 1796, Weston-by-Weedon £70; Collingham £36; Ebenezer (Anglesea) £45 7s. 6d.; Slaithwaite £76 5s. 6d.; Shrewsbury £172. In 1792, the Committee reported that Colne was to have followed Manchester, but it had cleared its debt during the period of waiting; a similar report was made of Bridgewater in 1796, of Capel Sion in 1797, and of Downton in 1799. By this year the period of waiting had risen to six years. Masbro' having applied in November 1791, collected £105 0s. 5d. in June 1797, Rhydfelen and Bedford obtained £76 9s. 0d. and £98 15s. 9d. respectively in 1797, the total for that year being £280 5s. 2d. This sum was exceeded in 1798, when the figure reached £518 8s. 0d. (Claxton £92, Coventry £160, Diss £150, Bolton-le-Moor £116 8s. 0d.), and in 1799, when it was £514 8s. 6d. (Barnoldswick £100 1s. 6d., Gildersome £142 17s. 6d., Ipswich £150, Rushden £121 9s. 6d.). Possibly the Napoleonic wars had an influence on the giving power of the subscribers, since with the turn of the century, the amounts somewhat declined, £440 8s. 0d. only being collected in 1800 (Braunston £107, Aberystwyth £106 19s. 0d., Newcastle-on-Tyne £116 7s. 6d., Reading £110 1s. 6d.). A recovery took place in 1801, £487 17s. 0d. (Swanwick £101 18s. 0d., Goodshaw Chapel, Rossendale, £95 6s. 6d., King Stanley £130, Wolverhampton £150 12s. 6d.), and 1802 showed further advance, £499 11s. 6d. (Pendle Hill £127 13s. 0d., Bradford (Wilts.) £121, Merthyr Tydvil £116 2s. 0d., Chapmanslade £134 16s. 6d.). The waiting period now showed a welcome reduction to about three years. In connection with the last case of Chapmanslade, Rippon, in writing⁷ of the ordination of the pastor, William Clift, gives information which enables us to visualise the hopes and expectations of the country

⁶ The Moulton case was presented on 7th December, 1787, four months after William Carey's settlement. "Beginning with a little 'meeting-room,' his ministry was so successful that it became necessary to build a church, and he worked hard to collect the necessary money, often walking long distances for the purpose" (*William Carey*, by F. Deaville Walker, p. 70). By their slowness, the Londoners lost the opportunity of meeting this great man in the intimacies of their homes. Carey left Moulton three years before the church representative was called to London; and when the collecting was being done Carey was at Leicester, quietly maturing plans for the forthcoming Association Meetings at which the Baptist Missionary Society was founded.

⁷ *Register*, vol. iv. p. 983.

friends. After stating that they had "erected a neat, unadorned place of worship" on which there was a debt of £250, and that the members could do no more than pay the interest, he goes on to say, "The case, however, has been admitted by the Committee in London; and it is hoped that it will meet with all encouragement in the great city, if the rich and generous people in the several neighbouring churches do not, by early exertions, make it unnecessary to apply for contributions in the metropolis."

Information as to the churches assisted and the amounts raised during the ensuing fifteen years is lacking, but Benham's Paper sheds light on some of the activities of the Committee. Shortly after the commencement of the century, the number of cases recommended was increased to six per annum, and a year or two later the number was again increased to eight. The increases did not, however, enable the Committee to keep pace with the applications, and more unauthorised appeals resulted. These included not only cases rejected by the Committee and cases withdrawn owing to the delay, but cases which were not good enough to place before the Committee, usually because of defective title deeds or unnecessary expenditure. The conflicting claims of authorised and unauthorised cases caused such confusion that in 1811 a special committee was appointed to investigate the position. This Committee recommended the discontinuance of personal appeals by the country ministers, and the formation in London of a general fund to which the donors on the regular and by-lists, and others whose interest could be awakened, would be asked to subscribe. Applications for assistance were to be made in writing to the Case Committee, who would then consider each case on its own merits and make an appropriate grant from the general fund. This report was altogether too radical for the orthodox; diehards maintained the fundamentalism of ancient methods and landmarks, and, "after months of discussion and repeated adjournments," by a decisive majority the sane proposals were rejected. Thirteen years later, at the meeting at the Kings' Head, they were revived and accepted with enthusiasm.

One result of the agitation was the election of a more vigorous Committee, and a year or two later, the number of cases per year was increased to twelve. The collectors now followed close on one another, the guide had a full time appointment, and the donors experienced some of the joys of regular and frequent giving. In 1818 it was resolved that no new cases be accepted for twelve months, so that an effort could be made materially to reduce the thirty-five cases already on the rota. In June, 1819, the Committee reported that since the last annual meeting, it had "recommended eleven cases from the following churches, viz., Earl's Colne, Halstead, Hay, Ivinghoe, Deal,

Whitborn, Idle, Swanbourne, Mile Town, (Sheerness) York and Mildenhall, on which rather more than £1,000 has been collected in London and its neighbourhood." ⁸ Twelve months later the Committee recorded that it had "recommended eleven cases for collection, viz., Newhall Street Birmingham, Gowar, Darkhouse, Coseley Newtown, Chipping-Norton, Wells, Chepstow, Thaxted, Poole, Brentford, and Sible Hedingham, on which cases between £900 and £1,000 had been collected in London and its vicinity." ⁹ The report¹⁰ presented at the annual meeting on 22nd June, 1821, showed an increasingly generous response, for the collections amounted to £1,123 8s. 6d., viz., Sible Hedingham £84 9s. 6d., Blackwater £70 4s. 0d., Counter Slip, Bristol, £119 3s. 6d., Thorpe £62 10s. 6d., Lewes £116 8s. 6d., Cheltenham £93 18s. 0d., Burford £85, Keighley £89, Sandy Lane £90 19s. 0d., Oldham £103 4s. 0d., Steep Lane £105 19s. 0d., and Southampton £102 12s. 6d. The *Baptist Magazine* for August, 1822, contains the annual report to the preceding June, and from it we learn that the amounts subscribed showed further increase and reached the fine total of £1,250 2s. 0d. The widespread nature of the appeal to London continues noteworthy, and is evidenced by the following list: Halesworth £104 11s. 0d., Redruth £148 7s. 6d., Brentford £104 19s. 0d., Haslingden £83 17s. 6d., Framlingham £81 17s. 6d., Harwich £64 7s. 6d., Battle £127 15s. 6d., Rayleigh £116 10s. 0d., Steventon £87 6s. 0d., Hunmanby £113 19s. 0d., Clare £78 17s. 6d., and Loughborough £117 14s. 0d.

At the end of this year no case for which a collection had not been made had been on the books more than eight months. The next annual report,¹¹ presented in June, 1823, discloses that, twelve years before, the Maidstone representative had collected upwards of £150. The amount raised in the year was £1,145 5s. 0d., and eleven churches shared in this, viz. Cardiff Welsh Church £110 12s. 0d., Blaby £87 9s. 0d., Earby £105 2s. 6d., Ridgmount £82 0s. 6d., Kilham £105 10s. 0d., Crayford £87 19s. 6d., Wellow £93 12s. 6d., Southwold £97 0s. 0d., Wallingford £104 19s. 0d., Lincoln £117 0s. 0d., and St. Albans £154 0s. 0d. The figures for the final year of the Committee's activities are not available.

For a period of exactly one hundred years, successive generations of London Baptists had thus helped country chapel building. What had they achieved? A conservative estimate would place the amount collected during the sixty years' supervision by the

⁸ *Baptist Magazine*, September, 1819.

⁹ *Baptist Magazine*, October, 1820.

¹⁰ *Baptist Magazine*, October, 1821.

¹¹ *Baptist Magazine*, August, 1823.

Board at from three to four thousand pounds. Based on the figures before us, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the amount collected on cases recommended by the Committee exceeded twenty-five thousand pounds. If to these figures we add two thousand pounds for unrecorded Board cases and the unauthorised cases of the Committee's régime, we have a total of at least thirty thousand pounds as the approximate amount subscribed by Londoners in the century 1724—1824. A great record! One that has not perhaps been fully appreciated by Baptist historians when dealing with the contribution of London, "amorphous London," to our denominational story. There is not a county in England but benefited by such generosity, not a county whose witness to-day is not finer because of the help given in the far-off days of which we have been thinking. The boldness of this chapel building policy is seen in stronger relief if we recall the condition of Dissenters in the eighteenth century and the opening years of the nineteenth. The iniquitous Test and Corporation Acts were still "a great bulwark of the Constitution," to quote a peer of the realm; the Conventicle and Five Mile Acts, although for many years inoperative, had not been repealed, and the Burial and other Acts served effectively to remind Dissenters of their inferior status in the eyes of the law. The national universities were closed to their sons; and to be a Dissenter was a certain disqualification for the holding of any public office. Their rates went to the support of an Establishment to which they were conscientiously opposed, while their own conventicles had to be specially licensed. In an age of reaction, they were denounced as Jacobites, Nihilists, and revolutionaries, "the enemies of law and order, and the subverters of monarchy and religion." Such a condition of things might well have led them to give up their cause in despair and to abandon all thought of erecting additional meeting houses. They were men of stern stuff, however, who believed, with the pious Doddridge, that the cause of Nonconformity was, in a great measure, the cause of serious religion also; and therefore, undaunted by oppression, they went forward, accounting "all nothing in comparison to liberty of conscience for the profession of Christ."

But new methods of giving the London help had become imperative. While no one questioned the devotion of the London Committee or the generosity of the London friends, few had a good word to say for the system. The points in its favour are perhaps best illustrated by an extract from the memoir of one of the ministers who visited the city. John Palmer, of Shrewsbury, in obtaining £172, apparently collected a larger sum than anyone else during the hundred years. His memoir contains an enlightening and valuable passage:

"After his ordination, [13th April, 1796] one of the first efforts of Mr. Palmer, on behalf of the church, was that of liquidating the debt upon their place of worship; this amounted to nearly £200. As the Committee in London had, at length, admitted their case, he was [in October, 1796] called thither, for the purpose of collecting. He also availed himself of the opportunity this visit afforded, of walking the hospitals and attending the lectures of the different professors, not knowing but he might be driven to the necessity of practising as a medical man, in order to procure a livelihood. [When fourteen he had been apprenticed to a surgeon.] This occasioned an absence from Shrewsbury of five months. He, however, happily succeeded in his application; and, on his return, the debt was fully discharged, and the meeting-house was freed from incumbrance. He had also the additional pleasure of finding that his pulpit had been well supplied during his absence, and his church kept in peace. During his stay in London, he met with great kindness and respect from the ministers and friends of the denomination. His ministry was universally acceptable, and, in a high degree, popular."¹²

The testimony on the other side was overwhelming. *The method was expensive.* It was estimated that on the average at least one-third of the amount collected was absorbed in expenses. A case in 1817 obtained £75, of which £26 15s. 6d. went in expenses. On another occasion, the church representative was such a good beggar that he obtained £146 13s. 9d., but his expenses amounted to £51 3s. 8d. "In one instance, a case was brought to London, on which £80 were collected, but when the expenses were deducted, only £30 remained. In another instance, £1 only was returned to the church, and in another, every farthing collected was expended."¹³ In the *Baptist Magazine* of March, 1829, James Hargreaves wrote of "a minister in course of four years absent on begging excursions forty-three weeks, during which he travelled 2,132 miles, walking a great proportion and yet with all his extreme labour, united to frugality, reduced the debt of the place only £140." *The method was unsatisfactory.* Assistance was frequently afforded to the least necessitous cases, the amount collected depending more on the ability, the persuasiveness, and particularly the importunity, of the collector than upon the intrinsic merits of the case. "All beggars are not distinguished by meekness and modesty . . . just as he [the Londoner] is opening his letters from the post, or preparing others to go thither—or making a purchase—or settling

¹² *Baptist Magazine*, August, 1824.

¹³ London Baptist Building Fund, First Report, Appendix III.

an account—with two or three other customers waiting for their turn—an eager claimant presses forward, takes out his book without ceremony, and commences a close siege for his guinea.”¹⁴ In such circumstances there was little or no time to inquire into the merits of the case. *The method was harmful.* Many of the ministers suffered considerably in health as a result of the privations to which they were subjected during their four, five, or six weeks’ absence from their families. Some of the finer spirits suffered even more as they reflected on the degrading method of obtaining money by “sending ministers about the country as *mendicants*, to beg from the religious public.” The first periodical paper issued by the Building Fund in 1845 records that “The case of Beaulieu Rails, now rebuilt and enlarged, was first presented in the metropolis by personal application in 1824. The venerable and beloved minister who then came to plead for it sacrificed his life in the work, and was taken home a corpse. Many other ministers have been, in that work, so broken down in health and spirits as never to recover. . . . The minister of A—n, though worthy of high esteem, declared to the Secretary, that the trial attaching to personal application in London was more than he could bear.” The archaic language of the critics is interesting. In the original prospectus of 1824, the author wrote of “the mental suffering endured by meek and modest men, many of whom have been little in the habits of communication with persons of opulence and still less accustomed to the peremptory abruptness of metropolitan intercourse,” and then proceeded to “picture such a man, hurrying to and fro, struggling beneath the burden of timidity and apprehension on the one hand, and the consciousness of dire necessity on the other—sharply questioned by one, angrily repulsed by another, and hastily turned away from the door of a third, without being permitted to explain the nature of his errand. . . .” A second pointed out “the injury to ministers who are employed in collecting, especially young ministers, in preventing their studies, degrading their minds, making them idle, gossiping, etc., etc.” A third critic considered that the effect was equally injurious for the country church, as “the sheep are left to wander, for want of the shepherd, and at times grievous wolves have entered in among them and devoured them.”

It is small wonder that a new method was earnestly sought, and that in the spring and summer of 1824, “many friends to the cause of religion, being convinced that a more eligible plan might be devised, repeatedly met and consulted together.” The leaders

¹⁴ Prospectus, over twenty-seven folios in length, issued in 1824, on the formation of the London Baptist Building Fund. It is reprinted in full in the *Baptist Magazine*, January, 1840.

in this movement were three in number, and for the skill and devotion with which they carried through the negotiations extending over several months they deserve more than passing reference. The first, John Dyer, had held pastorates at Plymouth and Reading before coming, in 1817, to join Dr. Ryland in the secretariat of the Baptist Missionary Society. His business methods did not help in the Serampore negotiations—"his letters resemble those of a Secretary of State," wrote Carey—but those business methods, coupled with his love for his country brethren, largely determined the formation of the Building Fund. The second, John Broadley Wilson, of Clapham, was one of the most active laymen of the day, "well known and universally esteemed as an eminently devout Christian, and most liberal supporter of the cause of the Christian religion in every section of the Church." As a member for many years of the Committee of the Home Missionary Society, treasurer of the Missionary Society from 1826 to 1835, and treasurer of the Religious Tract Society, he rendered fine service. The last, James Hargreaves, was minister of Little Wild Street, then one of the leading churches in London. At Bolton and Ogden he had been the minister of churches which had benefited by London collections, and, although he had had no personal experience of collecting, he evidently knew from first-hand sources of the hardships of the system. He was a ready writer and ungrudgingly used his powers in advocacy of the proposed Society. These men invited others to join them in a provisional Committee. The plan rejected in 1811 was considered afresh, and a halo was found to surround it, for in the meantime, its practicability had been amply demonstrated by the Wesleyan Methodists. Enthusiasm grew and difficulties disappeared. Subscribers to the present appeals promised to give even more generously. Thus encouraged, the provisional Committee recommended the abolition of the existing system and the formation of a central fund from which grants would be made. We have already recorded that the recommendation was accepted at the meeting at the King's Head on the 10th November, 1824, and the London Baptist Building Fund launched on its voyage. One outcome was that for all practical purposes, the method of assisting country chapel building that had been a feature of London Baptist life for a century came to an end. It had accomplished much: buildings had been erected, congregations encouraged, friendships fostered. Having paved the way, it gave place to a society whose beneficent ministry has enriched Baptist churches for one hundred years, is enriching them to-day, and will enrich them still further in the years ahead. In the next article it will be our privilege to follow this Building Fund in some of its operations. SEYMOUR J. PRICE.