

Preserve Our History.

The Committee of the Baptist Historical Society commends the following article to the attention of Baptists and others in possession of literature relating to the Denomination.—1909.

Revised from "The Friend," Philadelphia, Vol. 74 (1901), p. 286.

WE repeat, with suitable modifications, some counsel given in the *Presbyterian* concerning the preservation of manuscript data for the history of a religious society.

Sometime since, a wife in the work of putting her house in order after the death of her husband, who was a church officer, built a fire in the yard and destroyed papers and pamphlets, including the records of a church running over a period of forty years. Such an act was thoughtless, it was more, it was criminal. It was an act of ingratitude, for it showed a want of appreciation for the generation of faithful workers whose labours were ended. In a sense, it was an act of robbery, for it was the destroying of that which belonged to the generations which were to come.

And yet this is being repeated in some form almost every week, and oftentimes by those who know better. Precious things in book, pamphlet,

and letter, are being suffered to go to waste or are destroyed, and thus often make a blank in the history which it is impossible to fill. Thus valuable data for the future history of the church, in which we read the lives of faithful workers and the results of their labours, are lost to the world. Perhaps, it may be a pamphlet of which few were printed and fewer read; perhaps an article in some local newspaper, the only printed sketch of a minister or elder ever likely to be found in print; perhaps a discourse in which as the fruit of diligent and patient research we have the history of a church or an institution; perhaps it is only a bundle of old letters, in which are to be found much in hint, suggestion, or positive statement, that will greatly aid some future student to a clearer understanding of some man or church or period.

There is a sense in which all such things are not private property. And even the private collectors of his-

torical treasures for their own pleasure and profit owe a debt to the public. While they live or after their death, all such valuable collections should be given to the properly constituted depositories for such treasures, where they will be easily accessible to the student of history and so prove the greatest good to the greatest number. Thus their pleasure and profit are bequeathed to posterity, who will cherish them in grateful remembrance.

Such institutions for the keeping of that which makes, interprets, and preserves history from disappearing, we have in Historical Societies, or in a Strong Room under the care of our own Baptist Union.

To hand over historical papers or records to these is the duty and the privilege of all those who are making history, or have in their possession the documents from which such a record must come. There are good deacons who have in their possession valuable documents which they should make secure for the future, lest some thoughtless heir in a fit of cleaning should throw them into the waste-basket or destroy them in the fire. There are ministers who have documents in written or printed form, whose importance and value they fully recognise, that continue to jeopardize their perpetuity by not giving them into the care of the Society, where they can be classified and catalogued for use. There are wives, sons, and daughters of departed deacons and other noted and faithful men in the Church, who were makers of its history, that too often fail to appreciate the respon-

sibility upon them carefully to preserve everything in their possession that will throw light upon the lives of those they loved and the churches in which they laboured.

In these days there is a growing sense as to the very great importance and value of all historic facts and of everything that can throw light upon the men, the customs, and the records of any particular period. Even indirect evidence has often great weight in bringing one to a true conclusion, so we cannot be too careful or diligent in bringing together everything that in any way will throw light upon the history of the Church. It may be only a written or printed page, or private notes about persons or measures, or a manuscript sketch of the history of a particular meeting. All these have value, for they are the data on which all true history is based.

For the sake of the individual, the community, and the denomination, we should all have a care that none of these things be lost, but carefully collected and sent to our Historical Society. Thus they will all be easily accessible to the student in the years to come, and of priceless value to him as he writes about some pioneer preacher, some particular church and its historic struggles in its establishment and early progress, or the work of some meeting in its early endeavours to possess the land for Christ.

Then let the careless filling of waste-baskets cease. Let the reckless feeding of flames with this precious kind of fuel be stopped. If there was more thoughtfulness in

seeking for and preserving that adding to the classified collections of which is of historic value, there those things which are of vital importance would be fewer fires of burning importance to the student of the history treasure in back-yards, and a daily of our Church.

Wm. L. Ledwith.

Gifts of books, manuscripts, papers, etc., and of current issues from the press, written by or respecting Baptists, would be gladly received by the Secretary,

DR. WHITLEY,

53, West Cliff, Preston.

The present number completes the issue for the first year to subscribers of five shillings; in future there will be three numbers each year.

Guinea subscribers and Life subscribers will also receive part of the General Baptist Minutes, from 1656 to 1750, with introduction and notes; these are now in the press. The continuation from 1750 to 1811, with index, will be issued during the second year.

Subscriptions for the second year are now due, and may be remitted to the treasurer, JAMES WARD, Esq., Parade Chambers, Nottingham.