

The Missionary World.

THE month of June brings us once more to the Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland which in past years met at Swanwick, but now, in order to eliminate the necessity of travelling, meets in a London suburb which can be reached by omnibus or electric train. The Conference is a time when the missionary thinking of the past year is reported and such results as have arisen therefrom, and when the representatives of the societies seek to arrive at a common mind about the large problems and opportunities confronting them. The Conference has no executive power, but its influence is far-reaching. Matters calling for action are taken from it into the committee rooms and there dealt with in relation to the share of each society in the common task. No less marked than the growth of united thought has been that of united intercession. There are hard-pressed missionary leaders who look back to the main period of intercession at last year's Conference as the source of strength ever since, and who look forward to a like uplift at the coming meeting this month. The informal association of missionary secretaries inaugurated just a hundred years ago, whose periodical meetings for friendly intercourse, conference and prayer have continued unbrokenly, was the only inter-society organization until the Conference of Missionary Societies came into being after the Edinburgh Conference. The chairman of the Conference for this year is Dr. J. H. Ritson; the treasurer, who has charge of the co-operative finance connected with the Conference, is Mr. S. H. Gladstone; the secretaries are Mr. Bardsley and Mr. J. H. Oldham.

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A survey of the reports presented at the missionary meetings last month shows that giving has increased rather than diminished during the war, and that, although expenses of living have been augmented and the rate of exchange is adverse, the societies, with a very few exceptions, have cause for thankfulness and can face the future with hope. There are encouraging tokens, too, that the responsibility of spending money given at such a time and at such a cost is being faced by the societies, and that more than ever real thought is being brought to bear upon missionary principles and

problems. Without doubt much of the work delayed or broken up through the war ought to be proceeded with at the first possible moment, but there is a percentage which ought to be reconsidered and probably not recommenced. A really live policy never makes for needless change, but at the same time it fearlessly "scraps" all work which is not worthy of continuance in the fuller light of modern conditions.

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Among the many causes for thankfulness suggested by the May Meetings the foremost is, perhaps, the Bible Society's report. An issue of forty million volumes during the years of war—each a Bible, a Testament, or a complete book of Scripture—is amazing, and out of this vast output eight million volumes in seventy-five languages have been used in war service for soldiers and sailors, prisoners and men in labour contingents. The society has issued Scriptures in 511 different forms of speech, having added seven fresh languages to its long list during the last twelvemonth. The income has reached a record figure, yet a heavy financial burden, in view of increasing claims and inevitably greatly advanced cost of production, rests on the society. A cordial welcome was extended at the annual meeting in May to Mr. Nowell-Rostron, Dr. Ritson's colleague in the secretaryship of the society, who has succeeded Mr. Taylor, now Vicar of St. Bride's.

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We note with special thankfulness that the London Jews Society has closed the year with a balance and is much enheartened in its work. One of their secretaries, Mr. Gill, who has been taking a share in the interesting co-operative movement concerning Christian literature for Jewish missions, has just gone to take the lead in re-organizing and extending the society's work in the Near East from Cairo to Damascus. It is essential that in Jewish missions there should be a rising tide of prayer, of gifts, and of service if the opportunities of the future are to be met. All supporters of foreign missions should make room in their hearts for missions to the Jews.

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The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society has been surveying its income for the past ten years—an income which in that period shows an increase of over £22,000. It is interesting to note that while adult subscriptions have declined, the income from juvenile

associations has advanced fifty per cent. in three years. The subscriptions paid direct to the Mission House have nearly doubled, and the expenses incurred in raising the income throughout the home churches has decreased. The active effort being made by the W.M.M.S. to get its yearly income paid up in time to meet the expenditure is one which all mission treasurers should follow with attention. The May number of the *Foreign Field* has a diagram giving a monthly record for last year, which shows that while expenditure is spread fairly evenly over the year only £2,508 was received between January and March, whereas £44,438 was received in the last fortnight of the financial year. It is pertinently asked whether a similar distribution of bread, meat and margarine would be satisfactory.

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One of the strongest pleas for adequate work among women is the inequality which exists between the sexes in many of the Christian Churches in the mission field. The statistics of Protestant missions in China for 1916, for instance, are said to show that there are 103,672 men members, as against 49,822 women members. The seriousness lies not only in the fact that there are not Christian wives for the men-converts, but that women are potent in the home, and make the household idolatry a living force among their children. In mission schools boys are much more numerous than girls, and the evil of the past lack of balance is being projected into the future. Every mission board should investigate this matter in its own fields, and either itself provide adequately for the education of girls and the evangelization of women, or call in the aid of a society specially constituted for women's work.

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The L.M.S. *Chronicle* for May contains a half-page statement by Mr. J. Dyer Ball on Christian progress in China, which is arresting. Some of his figures we must quote—

It is 111 years since Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary, landed in China. There are now over 4,000 foreign (not native) missionaries in China . . . and over 15,000 Chinese preachers, evangelists, schoolmasters, schoolmistresses, and Bible women.

There are eight Chinese languages, and 300 or 400 dialects in China. This makes it necessary to have different versions of the Bible. The British and Foreign Bible Society has issued nineteen versions, and other Bible Societies have also printed versions.

In 1842	there were	6	communicants.
„ 1853	„ „	350	„
„ 1865	„ „	2,000	„
„ 1876	„ „	13,035	„
„ 1886	„ „	28,000	„
„ 1889	„ „	37,287	„
„ 1906	„ „	178,251	„

There are now 400,000 communicants and a Christian community of more than double that number, excluding Roman Catholics.

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The Mass Movement (May) number of the *C.M.S. Gleaner* is distinctly good. We have become somewhat familiar with the Indian situation, which because of the peculiarly affecting position of the outcastes will always have a special and compelling appeal, but the moving of large masses in Africa towards the Gospel has been less realized. Yet on the West (in Nigeria) and in Central Africa (in Uganda and the regions beyond) there is a remarkable eagerness to receive the Gospel, which constitutes a strong call to the Church. The facts and illustrations in the *Gleaner* will furnish excellent material for speakers.

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Missionary work has many sides. The May issue of the *Record* of the U.F. Church of Scotland notes that at Loudon, Livingstonia, Mr. Donald Fraser has just made a beautiful five-acre lake with a maximum depth of seventeen feet. A little stream near the mission has been banked up and the station has now abundance of good water for man and beast, and a stream for irrigation. This part of Central Africa is waterless for a good part of the year; in the height of the dry season travellers may pass along the high road for 140 miles and see no water. Surely the lake is a reproduction in the material world of what the mission has done for needy Africa in the region of the spirit.

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The Syria and Palestine Relief Fund (110 Victoria Street, London, S.W. 1) has just issued a singularly attractive volume by Mr. William Canton entitled *Dawn in Palestine*. It is published by the S.P.C.K. (1s. 3d. net). Those whose minds are specially directed at the present moment to the land which means more than any other to the Christian will give this volume the welcome it deserves. It is full of life and colour, and sets forth the topography and history of the country, as well as its present condition, in an

effective way. The book is sure to have an immediate effect upon the resources available for the relief of the suffering population, but it has also a permanent value for preachers and teachers. It is one of the small but happily increasing number of books which can be used to interest men and women hitherto outside the ranks of missionary supporters.

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It is with great regret, and a strong sense of lost privilege, that the writer of these notes for so many years is at last compelled, through pressure of other work, to forgo their continuance. May the CHURCHMAN and its readers none the less continue unfalteringly their outlook and their outgoing towards "the missionary world."

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