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CONTENTS.

Rise and Progress of Mission Societies.....	57	March of Christianity.....	69
Letter from Rev. Dr. Jenkins	60	Chart of Foreign Missions.....	70
International Sabbath-school Lessons.....	61	Missionary Roll of the Presbyterian Church.....	71
Our Own Church.....	63	Our Home Missions.....	72
Manitoba Items.....	64	Letter from Newfoundland.....	72
Meetings of Presbyteries.....	65	Montreal Anniversaries.....	73
Obituary.....	67	Literature.....	76
Ecclesiastical News.....	67	Page for the Young.....	77

No. IX.

**Rise and Progress of Foreign Mis-
 sionary Societies.**

IT HAS been so often and broadly asserted that Christian Missions only commenced with the present century, that many have thoughtlessly accepted the statement. Nothing, however, can well be farther from the truth. Its refutation is found at the very threshold of inquiry, for, beyond all doubt, the age of the apostles was intensely missionary, and not to speak of the first great missionary to the Gentiles, it afforded numerous illustrations of the highest types of personal zeal and consecration. Tradition affirms that nearly all of the first apostolic band, and most of their immediate successors, shared the fate of their Master and gained the crown of martyrdom. Although it is now impossible to describe accurately the nature of the organizations which bound them together, there can be no doubt that they proceeded in an orderly and methodical manner, recognizing the authority of Councils and Presbyteries, yet each claiming for himself as much liberty as is claimed by Presbyterians of the present day. Whatever the nature of their societies, the individual missionaries were eminently successful, for at a very early period Christianity had spread over nearly the whole of the then known world. The miraculous gifts with which these early missionaries were endowed were unquestionably one of the most important elements in their success. There was another explanation, however, which should never be forgotten, namely, that in the apostolic times every one who became a Christian became also a missionary. No century of the Christian era has passed without its missionary heroes; and even the dark-

est age produced a missionary society, under the leadership of Columba, such as the world has not seen since his day. "So blest were his labours, so rapid the effects produced by the example of his virtues, that in a few years the greater portion of the British dominions were converted to the Christian faith." From the college at Iona, not only were above three hundred churches which Columba had himself established supplied with learned pastors, but many missionaries were sent to neighboring countries. The Roman Catholic Church entered upon mission work in heathen lands at a much earlier period than the Protestant Churches. The Reformation in the sixteenth century, instead of paralyzing that Church, seems to have inspired her with fresh zeal and led her to retrieve the losses sustained in Europe by that movement by extending her influence in other countries. The Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Capuchins, and especially the Jesuits, were great missionary societies which distinguished themselves by establishing missions in India, China, Japan, Africa and America, long before the Protestants thought of foreign missions. It could scarcely be expected, indeed, that the Reformed Churches should immediately enter upon missions to the heathen. For a length of time their hands were too full with their own affairs, and unhappily they too soon fell into such a condition of apathy as unfitted them for aggressive work.

The earliest Protestant missionary enterprise we read of, emanated from Switzerland, in 1556, when fourteen Swiss missionaries took their departure from Geneva, bound for Brazil, South America, where a French colony had been planted a short time before. The primary object of the colony was to provide an asylum for Protestants who were persecuted in their own country. The "mission" was undertaken for their benefit, as well as