

[This paper is supposed to be written in 1935, when our Society would be 50 years in existence.]

SEMI-CENTENNIAL OF THE WOMAN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY--1885-1935.

BY ANNIE E. MELLISH.

"Mrs. Elano will now give us a few reminiscences of the New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island Branch."

So announced the chairman at the grand celebration of the Woman's Missionary Society. An old lady, with silver-white hair and face radiant with memories of other days, slowly arose. "My dear friends, she began, "It is not my intention tonight to give a history of our Branch, but merely to mention a few of the leading facts that have been instrumental in its success.

Allow me to carry you back forty-one years, when, with my little twin sister, I first joined a Mission Band. We met once a week, and our beloved president, Miss Joy, seemed to devote her whole life to Band work. She was always the first at the meeting and the last to leave, and proved equal to every emergency. On one occasion a large number of the members were absent. Some were out driving, some coasting and skating, and even the programme committee were reported to be at a birthday party. On hearing this, Miss Joy looked grieved and disappointed. In a moment, however, she was smiling, as usual, and called the members present to the platform to take part in a Missionary Bee—a review of the work of the previous three months. She then drew on the blackboard a willow tree. The roots entwined with each other were labeled Sunday-school, Local Church, Woman's Missionary Society and General Missionary Society. Then straight through them all she wrote in large letters L-O-V-E. The first knot on the trunk of the tree stood for Mission Bands, the next one Auxiliaries—a little larger and higher up; the next Branch; then, in the centre from where the boughs spring, Board. The end of each bough represented a Mission Field, and so explained through what channels our money is sent to foreign lands. We were all intensely interested and really felt as if we were connected with something. The meeting closed as usual, but what was our surprise on returning suddenly to the class-room to find our dear President sobbing as if her heart would break. We asked her if she were ill. "No, not ill," came the faltering reply, "but so weary and disheartened. If only the Auxiliary would feel a little responsible, if only they would help just a little." Here she suddenly stopped and begged us to forget that she had spoken. Forget! those words are as memorable as the first shot fired in Cuba!

The following year a great wave of sympathy spread over the entire Branch for Band workers. The Auxiliaries began to see that the success of the W. M. S. depended on the training of the young—that the future officers of the Auxiliary's Board and Branch were the children. They began to realize

the position held by the leader of a Circle. They saw her standing alone with a limited supply of literature, facing the many counter attractions and secular societies eager to claim the time and talents of the members, and that strenuous efforts were necessary to keep them within the Missionary fold. The ladies began to see that their monthly meeting with its given subject and programme, under the direction of an efficient committee, was very different from a weekly meeting of forty or fifty bright, active and talkative young children, for whose instruction, entertainment and bank account the president alone was responsible.

So the Auxiliaries began to pray not only for suffering women and children in foreign lands, but more than ever that the brave young workers at home might have sustaining grace in guiding aright the footsteps of the tender lambs. Then they commended, encouraged and upheld the President. They subscribed for "Palm Branch," supplied cake, candy, and lemonade when necessary. They attend all entertainments given by the Band and invited them in a body to assist in their concerts and public meetings. They appointed a committee, not only to visit the Band but to take charge of the meeting once a month—in short, they became as interested in the welfare of the Band as a fond mother is interested in the welfare of a child. Up to that time a great deal had been written on the necessary qualifications for successful Band leadership, on hints and suggestions, etc.—telling what a president must do and must not do, must say and must not say, until the list of requirements become so appalling that very few had the moral courage to take the position. But when the Auxiliaries arose to their sense of obligation it soon became evident that any person with ordinary intelligence who loved the Lord and little children, and said in her heart, "With God's help I will do the best I can," that person had the fundamental qualifications for successful Band leadership. True, she may have been discouraged at first, but with the Auxiliary, at her back she soon learned to apparently sink the dignity of her office into oblivion and become as one of the children—yet to hold a tight reign and to command their respect. She soon learned to open and close the meetings promptly, to have no favorites, to divide the honors equally, to have as many in office as possible; to call for weekly reports, to examine their books, to have the programme varied, to interest the children in the local church work, to dwell upon the bright side of mission work, emphasizing the fact of the thousands that are saved rather than the millions that are murdered. She learned to take an interest in the last letter of a travelling sister, and the new tooth of a little brother—to become acquainted with the different homes and interested in the children's pleasures and ambitions, and so win their love and confidence. These little acts are trivial in themselves, but are truly stepping stones to the greater things. For when a child's sympathies are enlisted in any cause, through the influence of a beloved leader, it means a devoted interest in their work, and very often results in a consecrated life of service.

(To be continued.)