

THE

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## MISSIONARY DEPUTATIONS.

We are quite sure that a warm welcome awaits the brethren who are about to go forth, east and west, on the usual missionary tours. The christian affection which, as we know from experience, invariably marks the reception of the deputations, will, doubtless, be renewed this winter. This intercourse brings prominently forward one of the strong links of connection by which our churches, although existing separately, are yet a sisterhood. Great and common objects are prosecuted with united zeal and love. Exchange of pulpits and other marks of confidence cannot, from the distance which divides many of our churches, be very frequent among our ministers; but this loved work of zeal for souls brings out the feeling which flows in a deep current among us. It has occurred to us that a few thoughts bearing on the missionary meetings will not be out of place on the eve of another winter's campaign.

*We are greatly pleased with the recognition of the missionary character of the churches which they present.* To be missionary in spirit and action is essential to the vigor and life of a church. Without room for growth it must necessarily be a dwarfed and crippled form, encircled with bands of death that we see. Expansion is a mark of power: hence the living throb of the heart of Christianity indicates progress. To save the lost there are wrestlings, sufferings, sacrifices. Need we ask what has been the history of every living organization of Christians? Has it not been, like the Acts of the Apostles, full of missionary enterprise? A church may be sustained independently of means from without: its pastor may not be on the list of missionary agents supported in part by the missionary society; nevertheless the thought of work to be done for Christ and the world, quickens its sympathies and fires its heart. Among ourselves we were few, if any of our churches, have sprung full armed on the scene, like the fabled Minerva from the brain of Jupiter. The tenderness of infancy has required the fostering care of judicious nurture, even for our best and strongest churches. Nor should we deceive ourselves by carrying out too far the analogy drawn from the childhood and manhood of humanity to church existence. We must view the facts of each field of missionary labor, on every side: the same rules do not apply in all cases alike. Different countries have widely marked characteristics: missionary labor, while presenting many features in common, is also possessed of strong marks of distinction. England, Scotland, Ireland, do not present the same dead level of uniform experience to Congregational missionaries; nor do we believe that colonies, wide as the poles asunder, can be grouped under the same category. The Scottish Congregational Union, as a missionary society, has had