

"Our Share in the World's Evangelization."

BY REV. E. I. HART.

LOOK in with me upon a humble home in Northamptonshire, England, where a young man sits upon a cobbler's bench and laboriously gathers together facts and figures regarding the moral and spiritual condition of the world. That he may the more thoroughly grasp the situation, he makes a rude map—sketches the countries about which he has so diligently been reading, and writes in here and there what he can ascertain as to the people, their habits, their religious convictions and their needs. That map hangs before him day by day, its facts filling up, the world becoming more and more distinct to his view, impressing his mind and teaching his heart. And when others come into that shop of William Carey, he does not speak to them of the gossip of the day, but he turns their thoughts to that which fills his own soul, and repeats what he has ascertained and seeks to impress upon them the spiritual needs of the wide world. And, as his eye follows land after land,—these are heathen, and these are heathen, and these are heathen—his mind is overwhelmed and tears gush from his eyes.

The great fact of heathenism which shaped the marvellous career of that pioneer of organized missions is to-day just as appalling and just as dark as it was to him. In reality the heathenism of the nineteenth century is a greater fact than the heathenism of the eighteenth. "Heathendom has so out-populated Christendom, has so multiplied, that whilst the Church has won 3,000,000, heathenism has increased 200,000,000." Though this is the case, it does not prove that Christian missions have been a failure, for we have much to rejoice over. It only proves that the Church of Christ must be more earnest and more active in its obedience to the Great Commander's orders, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Though heathenism, numerically, is a greater fact now than in the days of Carey, when missionary fire again began to burn upon the altars of the Church, yet heathendom was never more accessible than in this year of grace, 1896. The whole world lies open to the heralds of Christian truth. "God has flung wide the gates of India, broken down the wall of China, unsealed the ports of Japan: Africa is girdled and crossed. Turkey and Siam, Burmah and Corea invite missionary labor, and France, Spain, Italy and Mexico welcome an open Bible and a simple Gospel. These long-locked doors God has curiously opened with the keys of commerce and common schools, the printing press and medical science, as well as arms and diplomacy." One billion pairs of hands are held out in invitation to the Christian civilization and to the Christian religion. Oh, what inspiration to holy activity and zeal!

A recognized authority on missions has said that there are three stages of missionary work: *First*, the pioneer period, when as yet the missionary is met with such distrust and suspicion that little headway can be made; *secondly*, the period of *action*, when early obstacles have been removed or surmounted, opposition is overcome, and the cross is actually planted, and converts are multiplying; and last of all, the period of *establishment*, when native churches become self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating. During the first stage it is vain to send many missionaries to the field; during the third, they may be withdrawn as no longer needed; but during the second they should be

especially multiplied. The opportunity is grand but brief, and must be promptly improved. As we look around upon the various fields of missionary effort, we shall find that in a great majority, the second period—the period of action—has been reached, when the need of men and money is most imperative.

Saddening is the response of the Missionary Boards to the calls that come from every land for more men and more means—"We have not the money to send the men." During the past year the paralyzing order to *retrench* has gone forth from many a board. What does retrenchment mean? It means retreat and abandoning vantage-ground already gained. It means that new enterprises must be checked in their very conception, and applicants for missionary employ must wait, or enter, to be forever lost to foreign work, the already crowded ranks of the home ministry. We are passing through a crisis in our missionary history. What shall be done? I believe the Lord has been preparing for this crisis. To help meet this great contingency, during the past decade He has inaugurated that mighty movement among the young people of the Christian Church known to some as the "Christian Endeavor," to us as the "Epworth League."

The Epworth League was organized not only for spiritual development, intellectual life, social fellowship, recreative amusement, instruction in the doctrines and usages of the Methodist Church, but also for fostering the missionary spirit and preparing our young men and women for a greater work in the evangelization of the world.

"Almost everything that is great," said Disraeli, "has been done by youth." In looking through the pages of profane history, I discover illustrious examples of achievement. Alexander, Cæsar and Napoleon, while yet in their twenties, were acknowledged great leaders of men, and successful generals. Chatterton, Burns, Byron, Keats, and Henry Kirk, White, ere they had reached their fortieth year, had completed the work of genius and passed through the portals of death, leaving indelible names upon the roll of fame.

In looking over the pages of missionary history, I find that those who have done the greatest work for the Master, have been young men and women who have gone forth into the foreign field with the enthusiasm, hopefulness, vivacity and buoyancy which are characteristics of youth. Raymond Lull, that young noble of Majorca, at the age of thirty, was changed from a poet of lust into a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and immediately became a herald of the Cross among the Moslems. Francis Xavier was thirty-six when he landed in Portuguese India, and entered upon that wonderful decade of self-sacrifice. Ziegenbalg was just twenty-three when he commenced his work in Tranquebar. Robert Morrison set sail for the "Middle Kingdom" at the age of twenty-five, and Alexander Duff for Calcutta at twenty-three. Fidelia Fiske was twenty-seven when she began her work among the women of Persia, and Hannah Mullens was nineteen when she instituted the movement for penetrating the closed doors of Hindu homes.

The youth of the Church of yesterday had a large share in the attempt to bring the world to the feet of Jesus. The youth of the Church to-day—so much better organized, with more influence and enthusiasm and knowledge—must have an infinitely larger share, or else the work so near to the heart of our Saviour will never be accomplished and great responsibility met.

In the successful prosecution of the evangelization of the world, we, as members of the Epworth League and