

course, an outrage upon their superior wisdom, and they were glad, no doubt, to take a hand in the persecution.

UNEXPECTED RESULTS.

One of the results of the persecution was the imprisonment of the apostles. Their liberty was for the first time removed. No such experience, continues Whitehead, had befallen them prior to the Crucifixion. They had seen their Master's forerunner consigned to a dungeon (Luke 3, 20), and Peter had confessed his willingness to follow Christ to prison and to death (Luke 22, 33). Now, for the first time, they knew what it meant to languish within prison walls. How they spent their first night in jail is not recorded. Perhaps, like Paul and Silas, they prayed and sang hymns to God "who giveth songs in the night," and of whom it is written, "He hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary, to hear the groaning of the prisoner." But another and unlooked-for result of the onslaught upon the early servants of God was that many people believed. The most foolish thing in the world is to expect to hinder any cause, and, least of all, a good cause, by means of persecution. So many received the Word that afternoon that the number of believers increased to five thousand persons. The experience of Israel in Egypt was repeated in the early history of the Christian Church (Exod. 1, 12).

BRIGHT SPARKS.

Christ's enemies are clever at outwitting themselves.

What seems a hindrance often turns out a help to the Gospel.

That religion condemns itself which opposes the education and enlightenment of the people.

Rationalism never will satisfy the deepest instincts of the human heart, and Sadduceism fails to meet the spiritual needs of any age.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

Persecution in doing the Lord's work is the subject for this week's topic. Show that persecution has been one of the ever-present features of progress. Have some member prepare a ten-minute paper on the persecutions of early Methodism and their results. This will bring under brief review one of the most dramatic periods of Methodist history. Then have four members of the League develop in brief three-minute papers or talks, the four principal headings of the exposition above: (a) time of the arrest, (b) the prime movers, (c) motives for action, (d) unexpected results. Make clear that to serve Christ faithfully we must be fully prepared for criticism and persecution in the various modern forms in which they are presented.

JAN. 29.—"MISSIONARY MEETING—THE ISLAND EMPIRE OF THE EAST—JAPAN."

Our League missionary studies for the present year will be centred on Japan. When the eyes of the world are upon the Sunrise Kingdom, there will be an added interest in the study of the country and the people, as well as of the present condition and future prospects of Christianity in that land.

To carry on intelligently these studies it will be necessary for our Leaguers to obtain a copy of "The Heart of Japan," the Forward Movement Missionary Text-Book No. III. It may be obtained from Rev. Dr. F. C. Stephenson, Methodist Mission Rooms, Toronto, price thirty-five cents. This interesting book will form

the basis of the studies on Japan during the year.

JAPAN—WHAT IT IS.

Japan is an island empire, just east of China and Korea, consisting of a chain of islands over two thousand miles long. Canada is twenty times as large, and all Japan could be set down inside of the Province of Ontario, with a large margin to spare. Present-day Japan consists, in the main, of four large islands, Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu, together with Formosa, acquired by Japan in 1895, as one result of the war with China. The number of islands in the Japanese Empire nobody knows. Some are so small that they disappear in the time of floods. But those whose circumference is over two and one-half miles number 487. Because earthquakes and volcanoes have played such a prominent part in the making of this empire, it is a land of wondrous beauty. These fearful agents of nature have not yet completed their work. Travellers are still greeted with the smoke of a living volcano as they approach Yokohama Bay. How beautiful is the slope of the peerless Fujiyama, rising 12,365 feet from the level of the ocean! Everywhere in the land mountains, little and large, are in sight. They are partly covered with bamboo groves and woods, amid which are innumerable cascades and waterfalls, while the valleys below are of every conceivable shape, continually delighting the eye with ever-varying beauty. It is this perpetual beauty that has made the people all lovers of the beautiful, which is reflected in their houses, their clothes, their gardens, and their household utensils.

LAND AND WEATHER.

There is comparatively little level ground in these islands. About one-sixth is under cultivation, and this is increasing year by year. The larger part of this arable portion is near the coast and less than one hundred feet above the sea level, so that a huge tidal wave might easily sweep out of existence all the great cities, and, indeed, half the population of the empire. The longest river in Japan is far north, in Hokkaido, called Ishikari, 412 miles long, and the next largest is the Shinano, 190 miles long. Even these mighty rivers are navigable only by small steamers, and then only for a short part of their length. Broad-bottomed freight boats, however, do a prosperous business on all the rivers, small and large. The rivers are dangerous in times of prolonged rain, and occasionally they break their banks, to the utter ruin of the villages within their sweep. Sometimes villages are inundated and even swept away with their people. The climate is varied. There are cloudless spring days when the whole land blossoms out in beautiful colors, and harvest days, when glorious autumn tints cover the hills, but there are also periods of cloudy and rainy weather continuing for weeks and even months. The heat in Central and Southern Japan, all over the lowlands, is intense. The nights are so oppressive that it is difficult to sleep. Added to this, the rainy season is spread over the warmest months, and, once in a while, there is hardly a pleasant day all summer. As soon as one gets away from the cities of the plain into the mountains, above two thousand feet, the air becomes cool and invigorating. The winter weather is largely controlled by the winds from the north, which are laden with moisture and disagreeable. The frost is not keen enough to render skiing as soon as one gets into the mountains. Sometimes the snows completely bury whole villages, so that

the people actually burrow under the snow. The number of pleasant days, however, is nearly double that of rainy days, so that in spite of objectionable features, Japan is a pleasant country to live in. The population by the last census was 46,000,000. The average annual increase is over half a million, which shows that the people are a vigorous and healthy race.

FOREIGN INFLUENCE.

The Westerners residing in Japan have been a mighty influence, mainly for good, in the regeneration of the nation. It is astonishing that they are so few in number, only 5,333, including women and children. About two-thirds of these foreigners are Anglo-Saxons. One can readily estimate the amount of direct Christian influence, since, of these few thousands, 772 are Protestant missionaries, 109 are Catholic, and four are Russian. Japan is probably the best managed of all the great mission fields, averaging one missionary to about sixty thousand people. The rapid and successful passage of Japan from a country wholly closed against foreigners, to one open to free international intercourse, and from absolute monarchy to a constitutional government, is like a fairy tale. It is only a little over fifty years (July 7th, 1853) since Commodore Perry's fleet entered Yokohama Bay and started Japan out of her two hundred and fifty years of sleep. In course of time numbers of distinguished Japanese were sent abroad. Their eyes were opened to the power and value of the civilization of the West, so that when they returned, they, with kindred spirits, undertook the stupendous work of bringing Japan out of isolation and feudalism and caste into international intercourse, constitutional government, universal education, and equality before the law. The policy of the reform party created a profound commotion, and a brief but effective war between the Shogun's forces and the Imperial troops ended in favor of the young Emperor's army. The royal abode was changed from Kyoto to Tokyo, and the Meiji Era (Era of Enlightenment) was ushered in by a proclamation in which it was declared that "state affairs shall be decided by a deliberative assembly," and "knowledge shall be sought for throughout the whole world." Trial by torture was abolished, and Japan became the first of the great Eastern nations to be recognized as the political equal of Western nations. Religious liberty was granted as part of the era of enlightenment. Before this era, it was decided that Japanese had anything to do with Christianity. Now the propagation and profession of Christianity are as untrammelled in Japan as in any part of the world. A memorable date was that of this advanced constitution, Feb. 11th, 1889. Railroads four thousand miles in length, telegraphs, steamships, light-houses, well-equipped navy, increasing manufactures, mark Japan as enterprising and progressive, and rivaling in a most creditable manner the Western nations of the world.

A GREAT FIELD.

What a magnificent field for the work of Christian missions! The Methodist Church in Canada has entered this field, and results gratifying and encouraging are being achieved. Our men and women, our money, our prayers, our intelligent sympathy are being rewarded, and a fruitful harvest is in sight.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

Endeavor to secure a man of Japan to illuminate this topic. If you cannot secure one, get some capable person to