

Foreign Missions.

The New Silver Law

ITS EFFECT ON FOREIGN MISSIONS.

Before the Silver Bill became a law, in view of its probable passage, the American missionaries in Eastern Asia wrote that such a law would very seriously reduce their salaries, and otherwise cut down the financial resources of the mission.

Since this law has been in operation some of our missionaries have declared that, rather than burden the treasury of the Society by an increase of their salaries so that they shall amount in real value to what they were before this silver law was passed, they were willing to live on less. We stated this fact before the Des Moines Convention as an evidence of the spirit of self-sacrifice that animates these noble men and women. From what we heard from members of the convention afterwards, it is quite certain that the effect of this law on foreign missions is not at all generally understood.

The Missionary Review for November publishes, from the Independent, a statement explaining the matter, and which, we think, should be read by all who take an active interest in Christian missions in heathen lands. We take the liberty, therefore, of asking our editors, who are so nobly sustaining our foreign work, to republish this article from the Independent for the enlightenment of our people.

And now we have two questions to ask: 1. Shall our missionaries, in lands where this silver law reduces the value of their salaries, suffer this deduction—from 15 to 20 per cent?—and 2. Will the friends of missions, in view of this deterioration of the value of our finances, at once generously, and promptly meet the case by larger contributions?

There should be, and we trust there is, really no need of asking these questions. Yet it is well for us to understand the situation; and the executive committee of the Foreign Board, we are certain, would like to know the mind of our brethren in this matter, and our missionaries, we are also sure, would be greatly encouraged by an expression from their friends at home of what we are confident is their generous sympathy with them, and their appreciation both of them and their work.

CHAS. LOUIS LOOS.

The Silver Law's Effect on Missions.

Strange as it may seem, the Silver law affects Christian missions. We all know what it has done for the silver barons. It has made a fine market for their ore, and lined their pockets, not with their own coin, but with good, merchantable money, stamped with the seal of the United States treasury. It has raised the price of silver, and therefore accomplished the purpose for which it was forced through the two Houses at Washington. It has enriched mine owners; has it blessed anybody else? We will wait to see. Meantime, it is having a disastrous effect on the missionary societies which make large expenditures in foreign lands. By raising the price of silver it has so advanced the rates of exchange for all those countries which have a silver standard that a large percentage of every dollar transmitted to the various fields is lost in discount.

The dealings of the societies, it should be explained, with Mexico, Brazil, and other American countries, with India, China, Japan, Syria, Persia, and other Asiatic fields, are all conducted on the silver basis. In making appropriations for the year, the societies make

them on the basis of an exchange rate, averaged on the rates of the previous years. While this rate differs in different countries, it has averaged less, the treasurer of the Presbyterian Board, Mr. Dulles, informs us, "than 80 cents to the dollar for all countries."

Now for the effect of the Silver Bill on exchange. Mr. Dulles writes us:—

"I find, by reference to my records, that on April 9, our bills sold in China at 77 1/2 (this is discount on the Mexican silver dollar); on April 21 it had risen to 79 1/2; May 23 to 82 1/2; July 15 to 86 1/2; July 23 to 88.08, which is the last date at which I had advices of actual sales; or a rise of 15 per cent. This will serve as an example. In fact, our estimates were made below 77, the first price above given; but assuming the variation as above, it means that when we contract to pay a native helper or incur any other form of expenso for a given number of Mexican silver dollars, we must now, in order to meet our accounts, add 15 per cent. to our disbursements of American gold. This is not a simple illustration, but the statement of an actual fact."

The rise in India is somewhat less. On April 16, £600 yielded 6,832 rupees; on May 14, 6,357; on July 21, 6,140. The last advices, says Mr. Dulles, shows that the rate is still rising. Withal, the market is so uncertain, that 60-day bills can not be sold at all. The rates in Mexico are higher, even than in China or India, varying from 15 to 20 per cent.

What is true of the Presbyterian Board is also true of the American Board and other societies. A note to us from one of the secretaries of the American Board says its expenditures are affected, "not only in India and China, but in Japan and Mexico as well—fields in which fully one-half of our total expenditures are made." The Western Christian Advocate says a "special appropriation of about \$20,000 to meet the increased cost of exchange" in India will have to be made by the Methodist Missionary Society at its meeting in November. The cost of the silver bill to the Society will be, the Advocate estimates, fully \$40,000.

The outlook is a serious one for all the societies. A large increase in the incomes of the societies will be necessary to pay the same bills as in former years. Says Mr. Dulles, speaking for the Presbyterian Board:—

"It is early to calculate the effects of a change of 15 to 20 per cent. upon appropriations of \$900,000. Without entering into the merits of the silver question or venturing prophecies as to the results, it certainly is unlikely that silver will fall much below its present value, and those who are considering the obligations of the church to foreign work must bear in mind the unavoidable demand upon them this year, and indeed in subsequent years, on account of the special change in the rise of silver."

Upon the churches the burden must fall. It will not do to cut down former appropriations by 15 or 20 per cent.; therefore it will be necessary for them to increase their contributions by that amount. If last year a society appropriated \$500,000, it must appropriate this year, to keep up its work, \$575,000 or \$600,000.

What a pity the extra percentage can not be assessed on the silver barons! —The Independent.

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A CANADIAN GAOLER GIVES HIS THIRTY YEARS' EXPERIENCE.

Mr. A. Lang, gaoler of the Barrie gaol, writes in the Globe as follows:— "Drunkenness is the sin of our world. Thirty years ago on the first day of last December I took possession of this gaol. My experience is that eighteenth-twentieths of our gaol population during that period found their way here through using the poison vendid by what is now mis-called the Licensed Victuallers' Association. To talk about building houses for the drunkards' widows and orphan children sounds like an empty echo, while the law licenses men to make the poison, licenses men to sell the poison, licenses men and women to drink that poison till they become insane and commit crime, and then licenses judges and magistrates to send them to prisons or the gallows. Yes, first make men drunkards and ruin them, and then tax the country to build houses for the widows and orphans, all manufactured by law, and finished up by employing keepers to oversee them. I remember a very solemn case

which occurred here about nine years ago. A man in our county was hanged for killing his wife. On the evening prior to his execution, he asked the privilege of addressing all his fellow-prisoners, and fellow-drunkards as well. This he did by calling each one by his name, and as an earnest dying man he urged them never again to touch the accursed cup which had been his ruin, and had brought them to prison. He went on: "To-morrow morning I must die in the fulness of good health, and had it not been for whisky, I would never have been inside this gaol a prisoner." And on that very same evening the hangman asked me to let him out so that he could procure a bottle full of the licensed victuallers' cordial to help him through that terrible ordeal. If our good men who can write so sympathetically for the poor lost drunkard's starving child will only set themselves to work with an unconquerable will, they can place honest, sober and sterling men at the head of the polls, instead of drunken sets who are willing for the sake of holding office to open wide the floodgates of drunkenness and ruin to our beloved country! Why, sir, if it was possible next week to sweep off from the face of our

continent the whole of those streams of liquid death and moral destruction, I would guarantee that in twelve months the Toronto gaol would hold every prisoner in Ontario, thus doing away with 88 gaols and eight lock-ups, with a saving to the country of over one hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year in cash. Then add to that the amount of prisoners' time saved—it would rise to ten times that amount in our own Province. And in three years more there would not be a pauper child in our country. Every man and woman would be clothed in their right mind, and their children would grow up to fill respectable positions, instead of finding their way into gaols, reformatories and penitentiaries. Then we would have peace within our borders and prosperity within our homes. We agree with the principle of strict teetotalism in our gaols, and I try to treat my prisoners as if they were human beings, the workmanship of God's hand, and the objects of God's love.

