

THE AMERICAN BOARD.

BY REV. J. B. SILEOX.

It was my privilege to attend the seventieth annual meeting of the A. B. C. F. M., held in Syracuse, Oct. 7th to 10th. For the benefit of my young readers I will interpret the above mystical formula. These letters A. B. C. F. M. mean the "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions," which is the Foreign Missionary Society of the 3500 Congregational churches of America. To this Society a few of the churches in Canada also contribute. The American Board was organized in 1809. A boy overheard his mother say that she had devoted him to the service of God as a missionary. This boy was Samuel J. Mills. He grew up and was converted. With the map of Asia before him he conceived the idea of sending the Gospel to that heathen land. He asked his college companions to join him. Three young men moved by the spirit of God united with him, and thus in this quiet way began the first Foreign Missionary Society in America. The first year the contributions from all sources were less than \$1,000. Now the annual income amounts to nearly half a million dollars. The Board has received and expended from the beginning about \$17,000,000; has organized not far from 350 native churches, with about 83,000 communicants; has sent out 550 ordained missionaries and about 250 unmarried lady missionaries. They have reduced to writing 26 languages, have issued in 46 languages upward of 2,300 different educational and religious publications, and have had under instruction more than 400,000 pupils. They have now 678 mission stations in Japan, China, India, Turkey, Mexico, etc., with 1,554 missionaries, including native pastors and teachers. In their 683 schools there are at present 26,737 pupils. These young men and young women, boys and girls from heathen homes, are being educated under Christian influences. During the last year 8,234,280 pages of Christian literature were issued from their printing presses.

It is impossible in one short article to give any just conception of this large religious gathering. There were present at the annual meeting about 2,500 delegates. The most earnest and consecrated men and women of the churches were met to devise the best means of carrying out our Lord's command to preach the gospel to every creature. There were present some of the missionaries—"home on a furlough." Some of them had been in Africa, China, and India, for ten, twenty and thirty years. As we listened to their simple recital of the difficulties they had to encounter, and of the victories of the gospel, we felt that we were reading a chapter of the unwritten Acts of the Apostles. One of the best "commentaries on the Acts" is the intelligence that comes to us from the foreign mission field.

The opening sermon was preached by President Magoun of Iowa College, from Matt. xviii. 18-20. His subject was Christ's power, our warrant for evangelizing the world. He has *all* power and has bade His disciples to go into *all* the world, to *all* nations, to *every* creature. His power is our strength, His promise our inspiration. "Go . . . I am with you."

Dr. Behrends of Providence, preached to the "overflow" meeting in an adjoining church, on a similar theme, viz., "Incentives to this work." He emphasized three: (1) Love for man patterned after God's love for man; (2) Love for the Church as Christ loved the Church; and (3) greatest of all personal loyalty to Jesus Christ our leader and commander.

The annual survey by Dr. Clark was a clear setting forth of the condition of the work in the different mission fields. The year past has been marked by large additions to the membership of the churches—larger than in any year since the great ingathering of the Sandwich Islands. For the first time the Bible is being circulated among the Moslems. Large congregations gather to hear the gospel in Turkey. The famine in North China has in the providence of God suddenly opened up a "great door and effectual" to the missionary. The old prejudice against the Christian missionary being removed by the kindly aid rendered them in time of famine.

In Japan the New Testament has been translated, and by a decree of the government the Christian Sabbath has been made a day of rest. The outlook here is most hopeful. It is an example of "a nation born in a day." In the islands of the sea progress is made. On one island, out of a population of one thousand, two hundred and fifty are church members. In another island every adult is a professed follower of Christ. "It is something quite unprecedented in missionary history that native Christians, but two or three years out of heathenism, should be building large church edifices and school-houses, and meeting all the expenses of their teachers. Yet this is the record from the Mortlock Islands."

It is in Papal lands that the greatest hindrances are met. The lack of men and the wild fanaticism of the people, has resulted in ground lost in Mexico. In Spain there has been great opposition to the gospel from the "Chief Priests" as of old.

Austria stands foremost among the nations of the earth in its opposition to the gospel of Christ. The government is doing its utmost to suppress all evangelistic work. No one is allowed to conduct family worship except in his own family. "The ingenuity of a high church ecclesiasticism, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic, is taxed to its utmost to prevent men from accepting the gospel in its simplicity, while the want of true Christian life in existing church organizations has led the most intelligent to renounce all belief in anything that bears the Christian name." Through the intervention of the Evangelical Alliance recently convened at Basle it is hoped that a better state of things may be brought about in Pope-ruled, priest-ridden Austria.

A spirit of thorough consecration to Christ pervaded the meetings. It was prominent in hymn, in prayer, and address. With the cross of Christ before them, and in the presence of this great need—millions of our fellow beings living and dying without the gospel—men felt that they were not their own; that their time, talents, wealth, *all* were at the disposal of Him who had redeemed them. Mothers and fathers with tears of joy consecrated their children to this work, merchants their wealth, and the poor out of their poverty have given their mites—those mites heavily freighted with prayers. Hon. W. E. Dodge, a wealthy merchant of New York, in a short address on "Giving to the Lord" closed by pledging himself for the year to come to an increase of fifty per cent. over his previous gifts. Another resolved as a thank-offering to increase his giving five times over last year. An old friend of the Board who could not attend the meeting because of his house having been recently burned and because of sickness in his home, sent a letter enclosing in addition to his usual offering, a cheque for five hundred dollars. This full, joyful consecration to Christ's service was beautifully prominent in the missionaries themselves. Their joy and honour was to serve Christ in heathen lands. Young men and young women, in the prime of opening life were there, glad to be privileged to go forth as Christ's ambassadors to the heathen world.

The meeting of the Woman's Board in connection with this Society was held one morning in an adjoining church. There were 1,300 Christian women present. To look upon their thoughtful faces, to listen to their earnest prayers and simple, straightforward, sensible addresses, and to know that they had poured \$73,957.04 into the treasury of the Board during the past year, and to remember that the missionaries in the field had been trained for their work not so much by theological professors as by such Christian mothers made one feel that the Hannahs, the Priscillas, the Marys, the Dorcas, the Lydias, and the "grandmother Loises" were yet in the churches of Christ and that they were a power nearer the throne than the most perfectly planned organizations of men.

One other point before I close this already too long article. Men ask "What of the night." Do the signs of the times indicate a fulfilment of the promise that the "utmost parts of the earth" shall be given to the Son for his possessions? The answer is that the "morning cometh." There are to-day more Bibles translated in the various languages and circu-

lated among the different nations than at any other period in the world's history. There are more Christian missionaries at work, more prayers offered, more wealth given, for the conquest of the world to Christ than at any previous period. The number of believers is multiplied daily. The cold, dead world is feeling the life and warmth of the love of God in Christ Jesus. It is not spinning on grooves that run downward as some would have us believe. It is moving up into the light—into the light of God.

In obedience to our Lord's command we will work and give and pray that His kingdom may come and will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

THE ATHEIST CONVINCED.

Sin strangely blinds the human heart. There are millions of tiny fingers in the green grass blades of valley and hillside pointing to their great Originator, that the unbelieving mind sees not. There are silent voices in the sun, moon, and stars, telling of their great First Cause; but the unbelieving ear hears them not. The natural world has abundant evidences of the Creator; but the unbelieving perceive them not.

Athanasius Kircher, the famous astronomer, had an acquaintance who denied the existence of the Supreme Being.—This friend appointed a certain day when he would visit Kircher. The astronomer purchased a beautiful globe, representing the starry heavens, and placed it in a conspicuous place where his friend would notice it. Upon his arrival, he used the first opportunity to inquire from whence it came, and whose it was. "Not mine," replied Kircher, "nor was it ever made by any person, but came here by chance." "That," replied the sceptic friend, "is absolutely impossible? You are surely in jest." Kircher, however, seriously persisted in his denial, using the arguments his friend had used to him on other occasions.

Then the Christian astronomer reasoned with him: "You will not," said he, "believe this small body originated in mere chance; and yet you would contend that those heavenly bodies, of which it is only a faint and diminutive resemblance, came into existence without order and design." Pursuing this chain of reasoning, the atheist was first confounded, then convinced, and afterward acknowledged the absurdity of denying the existence of a God.—*Exchange.*

ALONE WITH THE FATHER.

Very suggestive are these words of Christ to His disciples on the eve of His betrayal: "Ye . . . shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." The individuality of every soul necessitates its loneliness. "The philosopher tells us that no atom in creation touches another atom, they only approach within a certain distance; then the attraction ceases and an invisible something repels, they only *seem* to touch." So "no soul touches another soul except at one or two points, and those chiefly external. In the central deeps of our being we are alone." Alone we must settle the most difficult and important questions touching our earthly career and our eternal destiny. "Each man's own nature has its own peculiar rules; and he must take up his life-plan alone, and persevere in it in a perfect privacy, with which no stranger intermeddeth." We are alone in the hour of trial and bereavement. Human sympathy cannot reach the seat of our suffering then. Alone we have to meet the king of terrors. Our friends cannot enter the valley of the shadow of death with us. Lonely and fearfully desolate would we be, in life and in death, but for the presence of the Father, and the verified promise, "Lo, I am with you always."

And yet God has made us social beings with affections and instincts which demand human companionship and sympathy, and render them necessary to our proper development and happiness. "Till we have reflected on it, we are scarcely aware how much the sum of human happiness in the world is indebted to this one feeling,—sympathy. We get *cheerfulness* and vigour, we scarcely know how or when, from mere association with our fellow-men. We catch in-