

# An Unprecedented World Situation

The Remarkable Story of Missionary Progress as told at the Kansas City Convention.



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RECENT visits to many of the principal battlefields of the Christian Church have impressed me with the strong conviction that the forces of pure Christianity are facing an absolutely unprecedented world situation in the non-Christian world.

It is unprecedented in point of opportunity, for there has been nothing like it in the annals of the Christian religion. There have been times when the opportunity in some one part of the world was as wonderful as now; but there never has been a time when, in Far East, in Near East, in Southern Asia, in all parts of Africa, in the East Indian island world, in many parts of Latin America, as well as Latin Europe, and Greek Europe, doors were simultaneously as wide open as they are before the forces of the Christian religion today.

It is unprecedented also in point of danger. This is due to the shrinkage of the world, through the greatly improved means of communication which has caused the nations and races to act and react upon each other with startling directness and power and virulence. The world has become a dangerous place in which to live and nothing save the expansion of Christianity in its purest form can make the world a safe home for man. It is not a matter of external arrangements. We must enter into and change the motive life, the ambitions, the spirit of men, and only Christianity has shown itself able to do this wonder work.

The situation is unprecedented also in point of urgency. This is true because so many nations are now in a plastic condition, and must soon become set like plaster. Shall they set in Christian moulds or in anti-Christian moulds? Christianity alone can answer that question.

More urgent than ever is the situation because of the rising tides of nationalism and of racial patriotism sweeping over the continent of the non-Christian world. Everywhere I have gone I have become conscious of the thrill of a new life—nations coming to their own, peoples being reborn. These national and racial aspirations, if taken advantage of by Christianity, will bring unexampled victories; if not, these nations and races will become opponents and will greatly retard Christianity's peaceful ministry to the world.

The situation is more urgent than ever because of the rapid spread of the corrupt influences of so-called Western civilization. The blush of shame has come to my cheeks as I have seen how these influences from North America and the British Isles and Germany, not to mention other countries, are eating like gangrene into the less highly organized peoples of the world.

Again, the situation is more urgent than ever because of the spread of the cancerous and leprous growths of the non-Christian civilizations that are eating with great deadliness into the very vitals of Christendom. If I were not a Christian, I would believe profoundly in Christian foreign missions, because at this time, when the world has at last found itself in its unity, no one in any part of the world can longer be indifferent as to what is taking place in other parts of the world.

The situation is also more urgent than ever because of the process of syncretism, spreading not only in the non-Christian nations, but even in our Western nations, as the result of this impact.

But, thank God, we are facing the most urgent situation the Church has ever faced because of the recent unparalleled triumphs of Christianity.

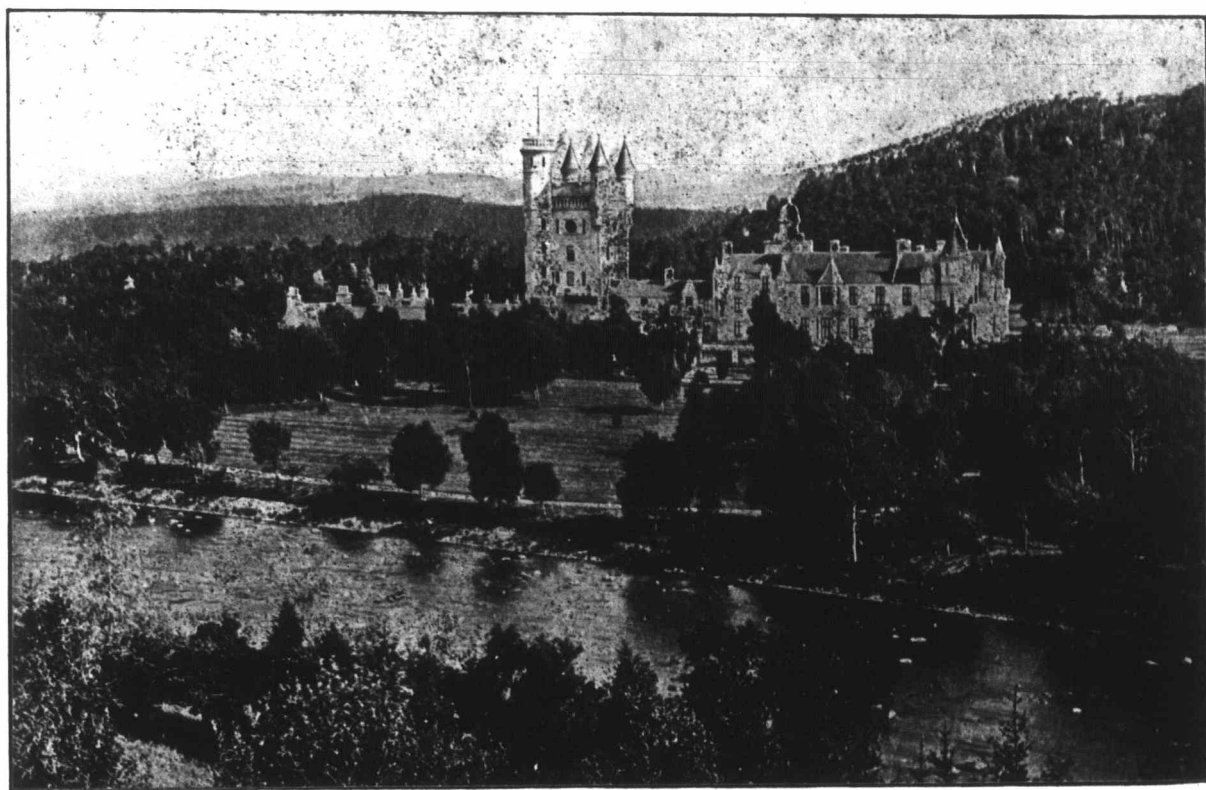
Wherever I have gone, I have found a rising spiritual tide. The Christward movement among the peoples of the world is increasing not only in volume but, in many parts of the world, also in momentum. Let me give you a glimpse of some of the remarkable things I have seen with my own eyes that reveal these Christward world tendencies and movements.

## RUSSIA.

On my first visit to Russia, about fourteen years ago, I found it impossible to gain access to the educated classes of that great empire. At that time if I had been found in a street-car with five Russian students, we would all have been subjected to arrest. Our meetings then were necessarily held in secret between midnight and four in the morning.

Now note the contrast: On my recent visit to Russia, the largest halls obtainable in the great

## BALMORAL CASTLE



His Majesty King George has offered Balmoral Castle as a hospital for wounded soldiers.

university cities were not able to hold the multitudes of the agnostic students. I shall never forget the sea of Russian faces reaching from where I stood up into the galleries, almost every one of them bearing its mark of tragedy. I say tragedy advisedly, for more Russian students commit suicide each year than in all other nations put together. I believe that it is true that the vast majority of the students of Russia have at least contemplated suicide.

Baron Nicolai and I left little bands of investigators of pure Christianity in all of the places we visited. In one university centre I said to the audience of students, "All who would like to follow this Christ as I have been setting Him forth come to such a hall to-morrow afternoon at two o'clock." The test was difficult, but over seven hundred students responded. I tried faithfully to put with simplicity the facts concerning Christ as the sufficient Saviour, and then I had that crushing experience of being obliged to leave those seven hundred student inquirers without any religious organization and without teachers. I had to leave these would-be investigators as sheep among wild and ravenous beasts. Such a necessity cuts off life more than any other experience.

Last May at Princeton we received into the World's Student Christian Federation the Christian Student Movement of Russia. This is made up largely of those who are still loyal to the Russian Orthodox church. Five years ago I would have said that it was unbelievable that I should live to see the day when there would be a Christian Student Movement in Russia, holding its summer conferences, publishing its pamphlets, with four Russian secretaries and four American

secretaries giving up their whole time to the leadership of these forces.

## TURKEY.

In 1895, when I first visited Constantinople, I asked about getting access to the Mohammedan students. The missionaries said, "It is absurd for you to raise that question, for it would be dangerous—in fact, illegal—to attempt to hold assemblies of the so-called students in Turkey." When I went on shipboard to leave Constantinople we heard the crackle of rifles shooting down the Armenians in the streets, and I was told on good authority that during the weeks I was there hundreds, if not thousands, of men had stones placed on their necks and were sunk in the Bosphorus. Why? Because they had the courage to think out loud.

A little over two years ago I went to Constantinople again. Think of the changes! I went to attend a conference of the World's Student Christian Federation in the political capital of the Mohammedan world. Representatives of Christian students came together from twenty-five nations. For five days we met in conference men from over fifty branches of Protestant Christianity, and in addition Coptic Christians, Eastern Greeks, Roman Catholics, and Russian Orthodox Christians. We did not apologize for our religious positions. Constructively we set forth the meaning of Christianity and its world programme. Not only that, but each night in five or six different centres in Stamboul and Pera, the largest sections of Constantinople, and in the largest halls we could secure, in one place in German, in two places in French, in one place in English, in one place in Armenian, apologetic lectures were given by professors from America, Great Britain, and Germany. Here evangelistic appeals were also made by witnesses from all parts of the world. These halls were thronged not only with Armenians and Greeks and Christians and Jews, but with Moslems in increasing numbers.

When I was about to leave Constantinople to go into the Balkan States, a deputation waited upon me and said, "You are making a mistake not to visit Stamboul University, the largest Mohammedan university, with its eight thousand students." I replied that if they could arrange a meeting before my train left I would go. They secured the largest hall available and when I went down there I had a struggle to make my way to the platform with my interpreter. Every seat was taken, as were all the spaces around the wall. Many men in the audience wore green turbans, which my interpreter told me were a sign that the wearers were Mohammedan theological students. I expected difficulty, but with divine strength I set forth Christ as the only divine Saviour, and I never had a more respectful hearing.

In some respects Mohammedans put us to shame. They do not apologize for their religion, and the last thing they want us to do is to apologize for ours. Even a little girl of about six years old, in Cairo, who was asked if she were a Mohammedan, replied as quick as a flash, "Yes; thank God, I am a Mohammedan!" They never apologize, and that night in Constantinople these Moslems not only gave me respectful hearing but they even gave sympathetic attention. An hour passed, and as I held up Christ as the only Saviour the attention was most wrapt. Finally, at nearly midnight, when I was obliged to leave, it took me nearly forty-five minutes to reach the door as men stooped me to ask most searching questions with the eager desire that characterizes a drowning man when he grasps the plank thrown to him for his rescue. They have urged us to send other lecturers and speakers, and we have been doing so year by year.