

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWSJEWISH MISSIONS IN CANADA.
The Earlier Years of the Montreal
Mission.

A Sketch by the Rev. J. McCarter.

The last issued report of the "London Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews" (1903-04) devotes two pages to its Montreal Mission, the first and as yet the only foothold of that Society on the western continent. This station came into the hands of the London Jews' Society by transfer from the Presbyterian Church in 1902. Seeing that I had something to do with that event, I crave leave to offer a short statement. No adequate account of it has yet appeared in print, and indeed a full and dispassionate statement could not have been written very much sooner. As an item of Canadian history it is interesting for the light it casts on Jewish missions, and I still owe a statement to those warm friends of Israel who trusted me, and by their generous help enabled me to carry on an effort for the Jews for over six years. I shall try, Mr. Editor, to be brief, stating facts without comments, and that, as much as possible, in the words of others.

Presbyterians First in This Field.

The Presbyterian was the first of Protestant Churches in Canada to put forth any missionary effort for the Jews. So far back as 1848 that branch of Presbyterians then connected with the Scottish Establishment began to send to Scotland contributions in aid of Jewish missions, cherishing also the hope of in due time having a Jewish mission of their own. Between that date and 1902, a space of 54 years, the Presbyterian Church made four different beginnings of Jewish mission work, which all proved short-lived and futile. At the time the third of these efforts broke down in 1895, I was a minister in the Canadian Church in a charge near Montreal. Without claiming any special fitness, it had been my lot in earlier life in Scotland to be brought into considerable contact with and into a lively interest in missions to Israel, and I had made this a subject of much observation and reflexion and prayer. While regretting along with others the non-success of the Church, and deprecating the abandonment of the effort, I thought I could see some causes of failure in the past, and how these might be remedied.

Successful missionary work must be in union with the living members of the Church of Christ, whether formally belonging to one organized church or otherwise; it must be supported by a body of prayerful sympathizers. Without such integral connection, aggressive efforts for Jews may be like a going to war without a base of operations, or like the whimsical idea of constructing a church edifice beginning with the top of the spire and working downwards. In the case we speak of, for one or other reason, the same result has followed four times over with slight variations. The agents, having received the generous outfit, with perhaps slender attachment to the church and slender control, after brief trial kicked over the traces, and took their own course. Each such disappointment tended naturally to dampen the general interest in the Jews; an int rest which it is the Church's wisdom carefully to foster, even as experience has taught it to do in the case of missions to the heathen.

Most societies working for Jews adopt a combination of force, a Jewish along with a non-Jewish agency, by which a vital connection can be preserved between the church and the mission, and Hebrew agents employed who will serve the church without controlling it. Your Scottish readers have heard of John Duncan, Dan-

iel Edwards, and Robert Smith, leaders of the Jewish mission, in 1841. Since the first a main part of the labors in this field has been from Scotland.

In this light I thought myself able, though not a Hebrew, to aid the church, which others might build. So convinced did I become that this was right, and also that the time was ripe, that I resolved to adventure an effort for the Jews, preferably with my own church's sanction, but if otherwise, at my own risk.

The Presbyterian foreign missions, as I came to know, are controlled by a central committee appointed by the General Assembly, meeting steadily at Toronto, to which all the presbyteries are subordinate. For the sake of brevity, I will call this the committee. I wrote to the committee and to the Montreal presbytery, offering my service for the Jews. The response was not favorable. The committee acknowledged receipt of letter, and never wrote again. The presbytery appointed a sub-committee to confer with me. This sub-committee met me six months later, and told me by word of mouth that the Jewish mission had been several months out of existence, that its belongings were being sold, and that I had been pronounced incompetent. The alleged ground of incompetence was want of sufficient acquaintance with certain languages. But having rather a facility, and also some practice in languages, I considered the relative innocence of the objection exasperated. I pleaded vainly to be allowed a trial, and then told those brethren that if ever the way seemed open I should begin work for the Jews on my own account. No other agent was sought and the Jews were abandoned.

Mr. McCarter's Effort.

In the step I now took, my wife was entirely like-minded. We believed that, if God had need of us, He would see to the required equipment, as well as to the results. We felt able to trust His promise, as taught in the Master's Word about the faith by which mountains are removed, and as exemplified by many instances of Christian work. I first resigned my charge, Mille Isles, and removed into a Jewish district of Montreal. We laid on the table of service the use, if required, of every dollar we possessed—not much in all—and trusted that God would in His own way and through the hands of lovers of Israel, supply the needed balance. When told that my Presbytery did not approve of my action, I could only answer: "There are higher than Presbyteries." I was ready to be at the service of my own church, and hoped that if not in that, then in His own way, the Master would care that no honest effort done for Him would fail of results.

I would here make a passing reference to many fellow-Christians, attached to us not by denominational bonds, but by common love for the Saviour, and in Him for that Nation, who are His chosen covenant people, who are in Him a bond of union and pledge of blessing to all the nations. There we found a sufficient tie to hold us united in prayerful fellow-working. I will not name any of the living, but feel free to mention some of the dead—Sir J. W. Dawson, Miss Barber, Mr. Colin McArthur, Mrs. McDonald, Miss Janet Dougall, Mr. W. O. Buchanan, Mr. J. A. Mathewson; with the like of such it was no small honor to have been in any way associated in the Lord's work.

For my own church, I have to say

that the largest part of the support I received came privately and unofficially from Presbyterians, i.e., from individuals, as well as from Sunday schools, Young People's Societies, and a few congregations; also kindly help came from everyone of the Protestant denominations. Contributions came from a range between Manitoba on one hand to Cape Breton on the other. One gift, an important one of a public nature the Presbyterian Church gave me—the remaining unsold belongings of the previous mission. Further than that the church gave me neither financial help nor moral recognition. This want of moral recognition proved the greatest obstacle and discouragement which I felt. I blame no one, but state a fact.

Some Results.

It will be asked, and perhaps regarded as the crux of the whole question—was any good accomplished? This lies for others to answer. Shortly after I left the field, an article appeared in "Saint Andrew," a weekly magazine issued by the Established Church of Scotland. It was headed "Presbyterian Church in Canada, Jewish Mission" and signed "J. C. Montreal, 29th Sept., 1902." This article begins thus: "The story of our mission to the Jews is a pathetic one—a record of failure from first to last." It proceeds to outline four different unsuccessful attempts, associated with the names of Ervostain, Webster, Newmark, and Tebitsh, and also refers to me as follows: "In 1895 the Rev. John McCarter a minister of the Presbyterian Church at Mille Isles, Quebec, resigned his charge, and devoted himself to missionary work among the Jews in Montreal, at his own motion, looking for encouragement and support to private individuals. For seven long years Mr. McCarter continued his self-imposed and self-denying labors with very slender tokens of visible success, but with a zeal and perseverance worthy of all praise. He has recently, I understand, gone to Britain." It being evident that the initials "J. C." stand for James Croil, the esteemed ex-editor of the Presbyterian Record, his article has the appearance of a semi-official statement of the church itself or at least indicates competent knowledge. In the light, while I thank the writer for his kindly sentiment, I venture a remark on his assertion about "slender visible success." Does he furnish any ground? Let it be remembered that at the time I began, no Canadian church was touching the Jews, that one main object to which I distinctly set myself was to foster by word and pen general interest on their behalf, and that when I purposed to leave, three strong religious societies—the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Episcopal Church in Canada, and the London Jews' Society—were equally ready to take it over, and continue it. This scarcely suggests an absence of visible success. Or what was it that brought about a rivalry of churches and societies? What made the difference of the situation in 1895 and 1902?

Mille Isles, which I vacated, had never suffered, and meanwhile an abandoned mission had been rescued, had been fostered with patience and prayer, and become a recognized, equipped, field of work. It is to-day quite evident. In a word, if anyone sees fit to call the Presbyterian church's efforts "failure," the effort which that church neither recognized nor aided, is bearing permanent results. While I sincerely wish that