

Our Contributors

The Ideal Missionary Meeting.

No missionary society can do its best work without high ideals. The perfection sought may never be fully attained, but the higher the aim the greater the achievement. In every missionary meeting there are four things to be considered—preparation, place, people, and program.

PREPARATION—Back of the ideal missionary meeting must be ideal preparation, for such missionary meetings do not "just grow." They are the result of hard work and earnest, intelligent, prayerful planning. Every detail concerning the program, the place of meeting, the announcement from pulpit or press, the personal invitation to newcomers, must be carefully considered beforehand, and nothing forgotten.

PLACE—The place in which a missionary meeting is held has much to do with making it ideal or otherwise. There has been a growing tendency in recent years to hold the meetings in private houses, and in many instances this has resulted in a large increase of attendance. Church parlors are not always bright and cheerful, and meetings held in them are apt to borrow coldness from the barren walls and stiffness from the formal rows of straight backed chairs. A transformation can be easily wrought by rearranging the chairs in some manner suggestive of sociability, by hanging missionary maps, charts, and pictures on the walls, and by bringing in fresh flowers, and curios from missionary lands.

PEOPLE—It is impossible to have an ideal meeting without people, and plenty of them. Not that small meetings are unprofitable; indeed, they are often full of spiritual power, and mighty in result. But there is enthusiasm in numbers, and a small meeting that ought to be a large one, and could be with a little effort, is certainly not ideal. But it is not enough for people to be present at a missionary meeting—they must be pleasant as well, ready to greet one another with a cordial handshake and a friendly word. Otherwise the meeting will not be ideal, for there is nothing in the world so depressing as a company of icebergs in a Christian church.

THE PROGRAM—But, after all, the program is the most important part about a missionary meeting. Here are ten points to be considered:

1 *The Leader*.—Carlyle says: "Let him who would move and convince others be first moved and convinced himself." The ideal leader, therefore, should be an earnest, consecrated Christian, full of the spirit of missions, able to inspire others with love for the work.

2 *The Length*.—An ideal missionary program must not be too long; ordinarily an hour and a half is sufficient. Papers and discussions should be strictly limited in time; otherwise they are apt to become exceedingly wearisome by reason of their length.

3 *The Transaction of Business*.—Long-drawn-out business discussions are fatal to a missionary meeting. In the ideal society business is reduced to a minimum and disposed of promptly, all matters of importance having been first discussed by the Executive Committee.

4 *The Aim*.—In every battle, owing to random shooting, there is a great waste

of ammunition. It is said that but one bullet in a thousand hits the enemy, and but one in ten thousand proves fatal. There is the same waste in missionary meetings, largely because our missionary shot is fired without definite aim. Is it not true that sometimes the Scriptures are read and prayers are offered largely because it is the proper thing to do? In the ideal meeting every number on the program has a special mission, having been chosen with definite aim of interesting people and of inducing them to pray for the work, to give liberally of their time and money, or go personally to the foreign field.

5 *The Scripture Lesson*.—In the ideal missionary meeting the Bible is used as the "sword of the Spirit," the all-powerful Word of God. Especial study should be given to the Scriptural foundations on which missionary operations rest: the "Great Commission" as recorded in the four Gospels and the book of Acts; the rewards promised to those who take up missionary work, and the danger of neglecting it; and the great promises and prophecies by which the ultimate triumph of world wide missions is assured.

6 *Prayer*.—In the ideal missionary meeting there is much prayer, not only in connection with the devotional service, but at intervals during the entire meeting. There should be more real praying for specific things. It was said of Gossner that during his life he "prayed open both hearts and pocketbooks; prayed up the walls of a hospital; prayed mission stations into being." Missionary societies may pray workers into the field, courage into the hearts of missionaries, money into empty treasuries, and heathen souls into the kingdom of God. Too little use is made of silent prayer, which engages all hearts in a way that audible petitions sometimes fail to do.

7 *Music*.—Music is an important factor in the ideal meeting. While it is well occasionally to arrange for special numbers in the way of appropriate solos or duets, the music should largely consist of congregational singing.

8 *The Study of Missions*.—To be ideal, the papers, discussions, etc., which form the main body of the program should deal not only with the work of the denomination to which the society belongs, but also with general missionary history, giving broad expansive views of world-wide and centuries-long missionary effort.

9 *Living Links*.—An ideal program always includes something that will bring the home worker in close and sympathetic touch with the missionary on the field. An ideal way of doing this is in vogue in the First Congregational Church of Springfield, Ohio. To each member of the society a missionary is assigned. In response to roll call the members give the names of their missionaries and items of interest about their work. The plan works admirably.

10 *Fresh Material*.—A prominent educator has given a word of advice to teachers which may well be heeded by missionary leaders. He says: "Let your pupils drink from a running stream; even animals will not drink from a stagnant pool." The ideal missionary program presents only bright, fresh, up to date missionary material.—The Missionary Review of The World.

Purpose.

Every life has its discouragements. Who has not felt chilly blasts that have come from the cold bleak rocks of disappointed hopes? Along the pathway of life, lying buried in the sands of time may be found the shattered skeletons of beautiful forms, that once filled our minds and thrilled our hearts with vivid purposes and living contemplations. The purposes have not been achieved; the contemplations have not been realized, and we are therefore apt to consider life a failure. But is life a failure to the extent in which we have not succeeded in accomplishing even the highest and noblest aims? Surely not, a noble purpose is a great instrument of education. And in preparation to the nobility of our thought, the grandeur of our conceptions, the loftiness of our aims are the benefits accruing to our whole life. We may only have for the reward of all our toil the bitter fruits of disappointment, yet the life may be better; the soul may be purer. It may be that so far as we can see in this world nothing has been accomplished; but yet the heart is the better for that ministry of purpose; that ministry of secret purification; that disposition of evil by the encouragement and cultivation of good. A noble desire! Who can measure its importance? It is the birth place of all re'orm; the germ of all development; the origin of progress. High wishes, fine desire, noble aspirations are immortal. Great and good schemes can never die. Their originators may be dead and long forgotten by an unthankful and ungrateful posterity; but in the sum total of human effort and divine achievement the great and good purpose of a man's soul shall live. Their perpetuity is guaranteed by their purity. And thus it is that a man "though dead yet speaketh."

How many lives are wasted or want of a purpose! How aimless! How useless some people are! Life is not made up of separate actions that have no connection with each other; but life in its fuller meaning and deeper interpretation is composed of an all controlling, ever persuasive and pervasive conviction expressed in the mighty music of action. But if there be no leading sovereign purpose in the man's soul, life is shorn of its greatest force.

"The man who seeks one thing in life and but one,
May hope to achieve it before life be done;
But he who seeks all things wherever he goes,
Only reaps for the hopes which around him he sows
A harvest of barren regrets."

Paul said: "I am determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

We are not to understand that the apostle was a man of only one idea. Through his fertile brain there coursed, before his mind's eye there flashed and from his silver tongue there rolled in the cadence of mighty eloquence, thoughts innumerable, thoughts majestic. But the one thought that dominated and controlled his mind as gravitation controls the earth; the one purpose that fixed his soul and ruled his life as the magnet fixes the needle was "Christ and Him crucified." This purpose throbbed in every pulsation of his being. And because of it his life was grand and noble

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