

Mission Notes.

THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY'S WORK IN INDIA.

The report which has just been presented to the London Missionary Society by Albert Spicer, Esq., and Rev. Wardlaw Thompson, the deputation who have visited the stations of the society in India, is one of the most valuable documents of its kind which has appeared for a long time. The fulness of its information, the extreme thoughtfulness with which every question connected with missionary work is handled, and the soundness of judgment by which its recommendations are characterized, all entitle it to the most earnest consideration of the church. For ourselves we hope that it will mark an era in the great work of the society in India. With this view we propose to give some of its most important passages, especially those which are most likely to be useful to the general reader. In the present number we restrict ourselves to some extracts on "Female Missions."

"It is scarcely necessary to inform the Board that the Zenana work carried on by the female missionaries, or by Bible-women under their direction or that of the wives of missionaries, was necessarily beyond our inspection. Into the privacy of a woman's portion of a Hindoo house no male stranger is allowed to penetrate. We were able, however, freely to visit the girls' schools, and were much pleased with the abundant evidence they afforded of the intelligence and progress of the children, and of the growth of a desire on the part of the people that their daughters should participate in the benefits of education. Throughout the South India Missions and in Travancore, and also in Calcutta, the girls' schools are a most striking and encouraging feature in the work which is being done by the agents of the society. In South India the prejudice against the education of females seems almost entirely to have disappeared, and there appears to be no difficulty either in obtaining admission for ladies into the homes of the highest castes or inducing parents belonging to these castes to send their unmarried daughters to school, and also to pay fees for their education. In North India, with the exception of Calcutta, opinion is not so advanced, and the prejudice is very much stronger; and it may for some time to come be difficult to persuade many, except those of the lower castes, to send their daughters to school, even without the payment of any fee. But the Zenanas in North India are being opened in increasing numbers for the visits of Christian teachers, and ladies with some knowledge of medicine have special opportunities of doing good, and a grateful welcome is accorded to them.

"All over India, north as well as south, the rural population of low caste are accessible by Christian females, though they turn their daughters' labour to account at too early an age to consider education of much value. There is, therefore, abundant room in every direction for Christian work by women among women and girls, and the deplorable ignorance and degradation of the female population makes such work of pressing urgency.

"At the same time, in view of the increasing attention given to the subject of female missions by the constituents of the society, it is desirable that the work should be established on sound principles. It must be borne in mind that, in proportion to the extent of work possible for each worker, Zenana work seems to be the most expensive form of agency employed by the society. It is not possible for any Zenana visitor to visit, on an average, more than five houses a day; so that, if she pays weekly visits to her pupils, she can have at most only thirty houses under regular visitation; consequently, either a large number of missionaries or a large staff of assistants is required if much work is to be done in the houses. Girls' schools are also necessarily more costly than boys' schools of the same grade and with the same number of pupils. Boys can be gathered from considerable distances into one building with a single staff of teachers, but social prejudice prevents girls of respectable families from going far from home; they can rarely be induced to go farther than the next street. The consequence is that several school buildings are required in different parts of a town if any large number are to be brought under instruction; and, in addition to the teachers, it is necessary to employ women in each school to fetch the pupils and to take them home again. Again, it does not seem desirable that a lady missionary should become permanently a boarder in the house of a married couple, nor is it expedient that young unmarried ladies should live alone. We think it should be a standing rule that two or more ladies should be sent to work and live together. This, however, will involve in every case the purchase or erection of another house or a constant rent charge.

"Coupling with these facts the consideration that the appeal for special help in carrying on female work is likely to become general in all the great eastern missions of the society, and that the Board has already to meet such appeals with the two-fold difficulty of the lack of funds and deficiency of suitable agents, we have been led to enquire whether any part of the work can be done more economically than by sending out European ladies to every station, and we have a strong conviction that there is no reason why this should not be. We find that in North India there are many earnest, educated Christian ladies, of Eurasian descent, who are familiar with the native languages,