

THE MISSIONARY REVIEW OF THE WORLD.

Vol. XI. No. 6.—*Old Series.*——JUNE.——Vol. II. No. 6.—*New Series.*

I.—LITERATURE OF MISSIONS. A RETROSPECT OF THE WORLD'S CONFERENCE.

[EDITORIAL.—A. T. P.]

THAT grand gathering in Exeter Hall, London, in June, 1888, has in many, perhaps in most respects, had no rival, not to say superior, in all church history. This we have affirmed previously, repeatedly, emphatically; and after the lapse of a year, we see no reason to modify this judgment.

Nevertheless, as we calmly pass in review the proceedings of those ten days, we seem to see, more and more clearly, a few marked errors in the conception and execution of that great plan, and in the management of that great conference, which were avoidable; or to say the least might be avoided whenever another similar gathering shall be held. This we say in no spirit of carping criticism. The more we see of a fastidious and fault-finding temper, the more we are impressed that the hypercritical and the hypocritical spirit are very closely allied. That conference was an alabaster flask of ointment compounded of precious and fragrant materials by a divine apothecary; and there were in it no dead flies to send forth an ungrateful savor. But it would have been strange indeed had there been no infelicitous features, no lack of forecast and discrimination, no mistakes in methods, which prevented the conference from reaching its highest and widest results for good. To some of these we shall now advert.

I. One conspicuous mistake was made in the *selection of chairmen*. The policy of the committee was to change, at every session, the presiding officer. The desire was to have some distinguished clergyman or layman take the chair at each new assembly, and to divide up these honors so as to distribute them over as wide a representation as possible. Some of these chairmen were not only men of mark, but of marked capacity and ability for the place. Others were as conspicuously unfit. We all know how much depends on the selection of a presiding officer. He not only guides but often inspires the entire meeting. His tact, promptness, decision, suggestion, are the very hinges upon which turn the success or failure of the court or conference whose presiding chair he fills. A moderator of an association, presbytery or other ecclesiastical assembly may facilitate business, suppress