

MISSIONARY METHODS OFFICIALLY REVIEWED.

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Partially owing to adverse criticisms and partly to increased general intelligence in the Church concerning missionaries and their work in heathen lands, large sections of the Church in Great Britain and some in America, have been led to make a patient and thorough investigation into existing methods of missionary work and their results.

The Wesleyan Missionary Society was precipitated into an investigation of mission economies and mission results in India, by the hasty and extremely indiscreet criticisms of a young missionary, only one year in the country, finding access to the home public through an influential journal, and fostered and fended by its popular and vigorous editor. The result was, the society was obliged to make investigations into the charges against it for allowing extravagant living of its missionaries, and for general expenditure to which results were not commensurate, whether judged of in themselves or by comparison with results achieved by others at less outlay. The ill-feeling and general critical attitude of parties, equally eager to ascertain what was right, but working from wholly divergent points, did not place the society in the best attitude, to ascertain the calmest judgment, of those whose testimony was essential to a thorough judicial investigation; but it did result in the severest testing of all evidence rendered in the case, and the discarding of everything that did not stand the fiery ordeal of a stiff controversy. We think very good results were obtained, but we cannot discern that anything was elicited under this burning-glass that might not have been better reached by other processes. Be that as it may, this was one of the forms in which answers were wrought out to criticism of a damaging nature to missions in general and to those of this society in particular.

The London Missionary Society was favored with a more peaceful method of examining its work and of considering all suggestions that were made commonly public, by the agitation of the missionary critics. They appointed a special committee of investigation on all these subjects of methods, policies, and fields of labor. They secured able men to discuss these questions in formal memoranda. They also invited missionaries of recognized standing of the most prominent and widely separated fields, as China, India, and Madagascar, to lengthened interviews with the Special Committee.

The Free Church of Scotland sent an able delegation to India to examine all these questions of policy and methods on the field. The Church of Scotland Missionary Society instituted inquiries by correspondence with eminent laymen as well as missionaries, especially concerning educational methods compared with evangelistic methods of work.

We cannot follow these various investigations in detail. They should convince the Church that missionary societies are careful to keep their whole work on the most approved plans, and are ready to make any advance movement that circumstances and experience demand and justify.