

THE WORLD'S CONFERENCE ON MISSIONS.

Where to begin; what to tell; how to describe in brief compass that wonderful gathering, is a problem more easily set than solved. To say that it was made up of twenty-five hundred delegates of whom more than seven hundred were foreign missionaries with terms of service up to half a century; that besides the delegates there were hosts of visitors from Canada and the United States; that after the morning prayer meeting from 9.30 to 10 o'clock, there were three sessions daily from 21st April to 2nd May; that these were thronged to the end, with frequent overflow meetings; that the conference deepened in interest to its close, more than fulfilling the highest expectations; is to give but a feeble idea of that greatest missionary gathering in Christian history. Hearing a strong magnetic speaker differs from reading his speech. It is speech plus person. It has "the man behind the guns."

Then besides the personality there was the atmosphere of the conference, that intangible something that pervaded the gathered missionary host and impressed others in proportion as they were susceptible to it.

Preparation for the Conference.

Other missionary conferences have been held, in 1854, 1860, 1878, 1888, all in England, and increasing in extent of representation with the extension of missions.

In 1896, four years ago the idea of a world's Ecumenical conference of foreign missions on this side the sea took shape, in the appointment, by representatives of some missionary societies in the United States, of a committee to consider, inquire, and report. Next year, January, 1897, on the report of this committee, it was voted to hold such a conference in the city of New York in April, 1900, and to invite every Evangelical Protestant missionary society in the world to take part.

A year later the acceptance of this invitation by the great majority of these societies was reported, the work was laid out, the various committees were appointed in the U. S. A. and Great Britain, committees on finance, on hospitality, on subjects, on speakers, etc., etc., and no effort was spared in perfecting arrangements for its success.

The Place of the Conference.

Big, busy New York, the metropolis of the

Western Hemisphere, with its between three and four millions of people, with its boundless wealth and luxury, and its close and strenuous struggle for daily bread, with its earnest, Christian activities and philanthropies, and the opposite in corresponding degree.

The central place of meeting was Carnegie Hall, on its commanding site about the centre of the city. It was a gift of the great steel millionaire, and will hold four thousand people. Here the morning and evening meetings were held, and the great topics discussed, while one or more overflow meetings in the neighboring churches accommodated those who could not get in. The afternoon sessions were divided among several subjects and churches, and that meeting could be chosen in whose subjects and speakers one was most deeply interested.

The Personelle of the Conference.

There were over twenty-five hundred delegates. Of these, the missionaries, more than seven hundred of them were first and chief, not in that they were the most prominent or did most of the speaking, but because of what they had done and the brave years that lay behind those calm, heroic faces. They were there from all lands, over four hundred women and three hundred men, from India and China and Japan, from the Soudan and the Congo, from Trinidad and Turkey and Thibet, from Central Asia and Africa and the islands of the sea, literally from the uttermost ends of the earth.

They were chiefly from the churches in the U. S. A., and home on furlough. They represented about one-twentieth of the world's missionary force. Some of them were in their prime, and were on their first vacation, gathering necessary strength for further service. Some were furrowed and grey waiting for the evening home call. One aged couple had gone out to Eastern Asia nearly sixty years ago, when modern missions were young and open doors were few, and now at eight-one and eighty-five, "if they had their lives to live over would not do otherwise." There were those who had passed through the Armenian massacres, who had seen their converts shot down, and heard the "zip" of the bullets as the leaden storm smote viciously around them. There was our own Mrs. Robertson, who had listened twenty-eight years ago to the night