

Missionary World.

THE STUDENTS' CONFERENCE AT LIVERPOOL, 1896.

[Although we have already drawn attention to the Students' Conference held lately in Liverpool, the following account from an eye-witness in the *Missionary Record* of the U. P. Church of Scotland is so interesting and stimulating that we reproduce the main portions of it in the "Missionary World."—EDITOR.]

Of all the Foreign Mission Conferences which have been held in Liverpool, that which met there in the opening days of this year is the most significant. No fewer than forty-two British societies were represented in it, and no fewer than twenty-four nationalities. But the significance of the Conference lay in the fact that it was organised, presided over, and officered by, and mainly composed of, British students. Six hundred and seventy-five students from the Universities and Colleges of Great Britain and Ireland were present, together with 60 foreign delegates, and 180 missionary representatives and speakers—in all 915 students were present, of whom 134 were women. The number of volunteers present, both men and women, was 213. The rest represented that Christian movement in our universities and colleges which is seeking to gain the students to the confession of Christ, and to organised effort for the advancement of His kingdom at home and abroad. That so many, who have not yet actually volunteered for foreign service, should have gathered with enthusiasm to a purely Foreign Mission Conference—surely this argues a deepening conviction of the divine splendour and claims of the great work of the evangelisation of the world on the part of those who are the very flower of our youth and the hope of the nation. The students of to-day are the coming leaders of the Church and of the people. The fire which burns in their hearts to-day will kindle the thoughts and lives of those whom they influence to-morrow. The aim which in now awakening their enthusiasm, heralds the practical endeavour which will claim the energies that are entering the arena of action. In the formal expression of that aim another significant note of the Conference was struck. It was the banner of Judah which led the march of the tribes of Israel; it is the banner of the Students' Volunteer Mission Union which is leading this great movement among the universities and colleges. And it was intimated that, after long and earnest deliberation and prayer, the British Union had resolved to inscribe upon their banner the motto already adopted by the American Union, namely, "The evangelisation of the world in this generation." To some the idea will seem utopian. Others will say that "the young men are seeing visions," and the old men who are consorting with them are "dreaming dreams." Thank God that it is so. It needs a sublime ideal to lead beyond the measure of the present into the new paths that prepare a great future. It is faith in this ideal which gives courage for the attempts which, by the blessing of God, create that future. This ideal is not impracticable. The existing resources of the Church of Christ, in the number of believers, in the money entrusted to their stewardship, and in the promises of God to be realised through prayer, are already adequate for the task, if only a mighty out-pouring of the Holy Spirit would awaken the whole membership of the Church to co-operate in the enterprise of faith and devotion. The Church is not straitened in the Providence of God. The world is open as never before, and facilities for the enterprise are multiplying daily. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," is a command awaiting the obedience of a generation that will recognise that this is a thing to be accomplished by them in their own day. The trumpet-call has been sounded. Will the Church hearken and respond? A few words may indicate the character of the meetings.

The first meeting, held on the evening of New Year's Day, showed the quality and spirit of the gathering. It was the reception meeting, held in the large hall of Y.M.O.A. in Mount Pleasant. It is a nearly square hall, without galleries, the long curved benches rising on a slope one behind another to the back, so that from the platform one had a perfect view of the thousand faces in front. Here and there a grey head could be picked out of the crowd; but the general impression was that of a sea of youth—cultured, pure, joyous, reverent. The Bishop of Liverpool presided and spoke the first words of welcome, followed by Principal Rendall and the Rev. Charles Garrett; and then Mr. Donald Fraser, of Glasgow, one of the Executive, explained the nature and purpose of the gathering. He lifted the aspirations of the whole assembly up into what all felt to be true way of blessing when he said, "We wait for God, not for eloquence, not for crowds, not for man, but for God. Our hope is in the living God, and we wait with hushed spirits to hear what He will say, and in obedience to do it."

After these introductory words were over, Dr. Pierson gave what might be called the inaugural address, a comprehensive and fervid exposition of the plan of God in the missionary enterprise, based on the divine command and on the unprecedented opportunity of the present time, with its appeal to those who were able to offer their life for this service.

The proceedings of each of the three following days were opened by a prayer-meeting, which filled the large Gordon Hall. On the forenoon of the two following days, and on the afternoon of Saturday, sectional meetings were held. On the first day the principle of division was geographical. India, South America, China and Japan, Africa, and the Jews were spoken of in different halls. In the China and Japan meeting Mr. Duncan McLaren was the first speaker. In the African section it was remarkable to find Mr. Pilkington of Uganda, Central Africa; Mr. Alvarez from Sierra Leone, West Africa; and Mr. Wakefield from East Africa, all advocating the spread of the gospel by means of native evangelists, but under European leadership, as necessary to a proper planning and direction of the work. In all these places native evangelists were ready, waiting to be led into surrounding fields.

The sectional meetings on the second day were arranged according to phases of work—Educational, Medical, Evangelistic, and the Bombay Settlement. This last is a movement inaugurated by Miss de Selincourt, of Oxford, to link together the women students in our universities and colleges at home in the support of a settlement among the Parsees of Bombay, where university women, who have given themselves to missionary work, may find a centre for various forms of labour among Parsee girls and women. This is a peculiarly hopeful means of reaching the young Parsee women, who are educated and accessible, and already two ladies are doing the pioneer work of the settlement.

On the Saturday afternoon the sectional meetings were arranged on denominational and special Society lines.

(To be Continued.)

Dr. Andrew Thompson presided at the annual meeting of the Waldensian Missions Aid Society held in Edinburgh lately. This society has been able during the past year to send £1,500 to Italy, which is a larger sum than usual, when no help was received from the visit of a deputy. The financial statement showed the charge, including a balance of £64 15s., to have been £1,834; and the discharge, including the £1,500 remitted to the Waldensian Board of Missions, £634. The chairman, in the course of a few introductory remarks, spoke of the great work which the Waldensian Church had done for the conversion of Italy. Several ladies and gentlemen took part in the proceedings.

Young People's Societies.

CONDUCTED BY A MEMBER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE.

A PRACTICAL TURN.

Christian Endeavor is only just taking root in Britain, and there are as yet but fifty or sixty societies in the Presbyterian Church in England. The Convener of the Foreign Mission Committee, Mr. Hugh Matheson, thinks they are already in a position to take hold of a field of their own. His committee is therefore starting a "Christian Endeavor Fund" for the establishment and support of a new centre in their South China mission. The "Juvenile Fund," formed forty years ago, has given \$225,000 to the Foreign Mission, and still larger things are looked for from the Christian Endeavor Fund. Mr. Matheson has lately passed his jubilee year as an elder, and has been almost all that time in charge of the Foreign Missions of his Church. He is evidently young enough still to keep a sharp outlook on a good chance.

THE SUPREME WORK.

The Society of Christian Endeavor is everywhere acknowledged to be evangelical, but it is very much more; it is evangelist. The movement had its origin in a time of spiritual awakening. It began with the aim of training its members in personal work for Christ. This has been the chief secret of its power and progress. Because it has, through the fifteen years of its history, been true to the original idea, it has grown with marvellous rapidity, until its influence is being felt to-day in all lands. The Society has honored Christ, and Christ has consequently honored it. If Christian Endeavor is to be a power in the future, as it is in the present, it will be because the Society keeps ever prominently before itself the supreme work of winning souls for Jesus Christ. This is our business, and nothing must be allowed to interfere with it. Attractive meetings are greatly to be desired, but the aims of the devotional meetings and all other meetings must be spiritual. Social work is important, but the motto of the Society in this respect must be, "Social to save." This is also true of our Christian citizenship work. It is spiritual in its aim. Because certain evils, as the saloon and the gambling den, stand opposed to the purpose of Christian Endeavor, and seek to frustrate it in its work of winning souls for Christ, therefore Christian Endeavor seeks the overthrow of these evils and cannot rest until it is accomplished. There never was a time when there was greater need than now for personal work, and there never was a time when our young people were better equipped for doing the work. May we be faithful to our privileges and our opportunities.—*Endeavor Herald*.

A MANLY MINISTER.

Frankness, courage, thoroughness, tenderness—these are the qualities that go to make up a man, and wherever they are found combined in one person, that person will possess the hearts of his fellow men. When such a character is steeped in Christ, you have a saint, and when such a saint finds his vocation in the ministry, you have a ministry of marvellous power. Such was the ministry of Rev. D. J. Macdonnell, because such was the man. His judgment was not faultless. Whose is? With his views we could not always agree, but his perfect honesty and fairness, and his absolute freedom from bitterness disarmed all suspicion and all malice. His career is worthy of study by every young man who aims living on a lofty plane and uplifting his fellow-men.

Well to suffer is divine;
Pass the watchword down the line,
Pass the countersign: "Endure!"
Not to him who rashly dares,
But to him who nobly bears,
Is the victor's garland sure.

—Whittier.

KEEPING OUR PLEDGES IN SPIRIT AND IN LETTER.

REV. W. S. M'TAVISH, B.D., DESERONTO.

March 15.—Matt. xxvi. 31-41.

If we read the Ten Commandments and then read the exposition of them as given in our Shorter Catechism, we shall see that there is a vast difference between the mere letter and the spirit of those commandments; we shall see, moreover, that a man may keep them to the very letter and yet utterly fail to keep them in spirit. The young ruler who came to Jesus, when told what the commandments were, declared that he had kept them from his youth up. Possibly he had, at least their letter, but his conduct soon made it very manifest that he was not willing to keep them in spirit.

It is well to bear in mind, therefore, that while we may keep the letter of the pledge we may come far short of keeping it in the spirit. We have, for example, pledged ourselves to read the Bible every day. But the pledge states neither how large a portion we should read, nor how long a time we should spend upon it, nor the spirit in which we should peruse it. Now, if we hastily read only a few verses without any special effort to understand them, or to profit by them, and then rush off to something else, we might say that we are keeping that part of our pledge to the very letter. But surely we must be wilfully blind if we conclude that we have kept it in the spirit. It is certainly intended that we study every day some portion of the Bible very carefully, reverently, prayerfully; that we look for the illuminating power of that divine Spirit who first inspired the sacred penman to write it, and that we then try to profit by what we have learned. Unless we keep these things in view, we are not keeping the spirit of the pledge.

Again we have promised to pray every day. But there is a vast difference between saying prayers and praying; and it is not unlikely that a great many people who say prayers never really pray. They have been taught a certain form of words, and they repeat these with as little reverence as a Chinaman casts his little blocks of wood before his gods. Doubtless Paul had often repeated prayers when he was a Pharisee, but he seems to have begun to pray in earnest when he was waiting, deprived of sight at Damascus. It was then God himself said, "Behold he prayeth" (Acts ix. 11). Many of the Pharisees in the days of Christ made long prayers, and yet they did little real praying. Jesus declared that they prayed to be seen of men, and that they expected to be heard for their much speaking. He found it necessary to rebuke them sharply for their hypocrisy. If, therefore, we would keep in spirit what we have pledged regarding prayer, we must wait upon God until we have thanked Him for His many mercies, until we have sought pardon for our past offences; until we have implored His grace for the time to come, and until our souls are in real fellowship with Him.

Again we are pledged to take some part, aside from singing, in every Christian Endeavor prayer-meeting. If we assist only in taking up the collection, we could fulfil that clause to the letter, but would we observe it in spirit? Certainly not in the way that the authors of the pledge intended.

If we are content to regard only the letter of our pledge, we need not be surprised to find that our work in connection with the Christian Endeavor Society has become very irksome, and that we cherish the wish that we had never joined it. But if we try to keep it in spirit, our usefulness will increase, our zeal will be more pronounced, and our pleasure in the work will be enhanced as the days go by. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth light" (II. Cor. iii. 6). We are working in a great cause, and our aim should be not merely to keep the letter of the pledge, but to attain that end which the pledge was designed to aid us in reaching—the development of Christian graces, the equipment for service, the promotion of the best interests of our fellowman, and the hastening of that kingdom which is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.