

The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions.*

ITS APPEAL TO THE NURSING PROFESSION.

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One of the most important and striking of the statements made at the recent World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh was as to the urgent need for Christians everywhere to recognise the gravity of the present crisis in missionary work abroad. This was the burden running through that most interesting report which Commission I. presented to the Conference on "Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World," and to which I am indebted for many of my facts.

In every battle, of any magnitude, there comes a moment when the victory hangs in the balance, foe has contended with foe, move and counter-moves have been made, success has been first in one direction, then in another, disasters may have been experienced on both sides, then he is the wise general who calls up his reserves fresh with enthusiasm, and undiminished ardour and strength, to hurl at the foe, and so decide the issue.

It is true that in the world's history never before has there been such widespread effort to carry the cross of Christ to all lands and unto all peoples and nations; nor in the history of modern missionary work has there ever been greater cause for thankfulness and rejoicing at the success attendant on such efforts, but it is this very success which in part has brought about a condition in the history of nations so critical from the point of view of progressive Christianity, that those most fully acquainted with missionary problems, and who like generals, view the conflict in all seriousness state that the next ten years will be the decisive hour of Christian Missions. Opportunities are now present, closed doors have been thrown wide open, Conservatism has broken down, the ancient races of the world have discovered that Western civilisation has something they have not got, in many cases ancient faiths are discarded, and a willingness to be taught and anxiety to learn of the Christian faith is apparent in many directions, where hitherto efforts at preaching the Evangel had proved fruitless.

Let us in imagination visit some of the missionary outposts of the world, and gather some idea of the success and difficulties of missionary enterprise, and some idea as to the urgency of the crisis.

* An address delivered to the Nurses' Missionary League, November 29th, 1910.

In Japan there are now 5,300 miles of railway throughout the Empire, which opens up the whole country to the missionary, every part being now accessible. There is a population of 52 millions, of which thousands are migrating to the mainland of Asia, many to take high posts of responsibility under the Chinese Government to educate in Western methods the Chinese soldiers and people. Steamship lines of Japanese ownership run to all parts, and her people possess intellectual energy and acumen which makes them successful competitors with the finest of European intellect.

At least 200 more missionaries are needed during the next ten years, to in any way meet the exigencies of the situation there. China is to-day taking lessons of Japan, and has 4,000 students at Tokio. Japan is sending literature through China broadcast, much of it being materialistic and irreligious.

The call for workers, therefore, is urgent, for the conversion of Japan would be the capture of a strategic stronghold, and Japan then will lead the Orient—true—but to Christ.

Such things are possible. Think of the miracles that have been happening in that little country of Korea, now under the sovereignty of Japan. Twenty-three years ago seven Koreans met behind closed doors in the city of Seoul for the first celebration of the Holy Communion in Korea. To-day the followers of Jesus Christ number 200,000, and these have been praying and working so that half a million may be born into the kingdom of God this year just elapsing. The total population is thought to be about 12 million, so that the whole nation may with effort and faith be won within ten years.

The Korean is especially a witnessing church, and has actually contributed £25,000 annually; this sum may be multiplied sevenfold to indicate its actual purchasing power in that country. One Korean sold his ox, and hitched himself to the plough, and gave the proceeds of the sale so that a chapel might be built. Women give their rings; families contribute the "good rice" and live on millet so as to contribute to the support of native evangelists.

Medical Mission work has been a most valuable agency in breaking down old customs and drawing the people under the influence of Christianity, 150,000 sick are ministered to yearly by the missionary doctors.

Here again to do the needed work, another 180 missionaries, men and women, are needed.

Now let us visit that nation, the contemporary of Egypt and Babylon, possessing even

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