

## Monthly Religious Record.

THE New Year opens on a time of controversy. It would seem as if the fervour of religious revival had for the moment given place to doubt and anxiety. There are serious questions as to success or "failure;" there are discussions as to the rival claims of new and older methods of evangelisation; and there are far graver difficulties of finance threatening societies that have long been prominent in the mission field. At the same time there is no apparent cessation in religious activities; there are still the indications of genuine life, both in the sphere of thought, and in practical dealing with the deeper needs of men. There can indeed be no doubt that as regards funds, whatever other causes may affect them, one reason of deficiency in some quarters is the multiplication of claims, and the vastly wider channels by which the goodwill of men flows forth. As to controversy, it may mean progress, if conducted in a right spirit; and no true friend of Christianity will shrink from any fair criticism of the methods by which it can be best upheld or preached.

CRITICS who are so ready to speak of missionary failure, need to be reminded that a large proportion of the work on the mission field is of necessity and intention simply preparatory. It is not so much a question as to whether the fields are ripe for the harvest, as whether the ground is being prepared, and the right seed being sown. Take any hundred years of European history, and note the conditions of true progress. God has appointed a time of growth as certainly as the time of ingathering, and the premature demand for calculable results may sometimes be but proof of the childish feebleness of our faith in the ways of His procedure. Thus, a writer in the *London Missionary Chronicle* fitly calls attention to the extensive work done by the missionary societies in elementary and secondary education in India. In connection with the London Society alone, the number of scholars in mission schools has grown at a remarkable rate. In 1872, 9,600 boys and 2,800 girls were under instruction by its missionaries. In 1882 this number had increased to 14,600 and 4,400 respectively. At the close of 1887 they had still further grown to 17,700 and 6,600. "It is said that very few are converted to Christianity in connection with these schools. It will not, surely, be contended by the advocates of denominational schools in England, who are at present pressing so strongly for a consideration of their claims, that the work of such schools results in many conversions to Christianity. They know very well, however, the great value of the schools for the purpose of instilling into the minds of the young the principles of Church polity and ideas of Christian truth which they regard as of vital importance in their after life. Can it be for a moment supposed that mission schools in India are less valuable? As a matter of fact, it is continually being proved that the most sympathetic and receptive hearers of the Gospel throughout the great mission districts visited are the young men who have a knowledge of Christianity gained as pupils in the mission schools." Similarly, there is a silent influence at work among the women. The rapidity with which the desire for female education is growing among the respectable and even the high-caste circles in India, is very noticeable. "In connection with our own missions this advance has, during the last twenty years, been most gratifying. Our Indian female missionaries and their native assistants have at present admission to, and regular work in, about 3,000 native heathen homes. When it is remembered that the conditions of family life in India involve the gathering together under a common roof of the wives and the children of the sons of the house, it will be seen that entrance to an Indian home implies access, as a rule, to a much larger number of persons than would be reached by similar means in this country. At stated intervals, usually once a week, Christian women are now visiting in these homes and regularly reading portions of Scripture, and instructing the women—young and old—in the great elementary truths of the Gospel of Christ. Such work as this cannot possibly be tabulated by any marked results of conversions."

THE Mohammedans of Lahore have had for many years an association for the promotion of Islam. It seems to have been on too aristocratic a basis, and to have failed to enlist the support and sympathy of the community. Very recently a new association has been formed, which sets forth as its great object the defence of Islam. At its inaugural meeting, Sir Syed Ahmad, who by general consent stands at the head of the Mohammedan community, a great friend of the English, and at the same time a stout defender of his own faith, gave a vigorous address, in which he said it was indispensable for them to repel the "intolerable attacks" of the missionaries, if their holy faith was to be upheld. In Calcutta a new monthly magazine has been started, with the avowed purpose of "demolishing Christianity and setting up a national religion in its stead." Its editor, a well-known literary man, says: "The rapid spread of the mischievous teaching of the Bible in this country is a serious calamity. Many hundreds of Christian missionaries . . . are coming out here, and pursuing the work of proselytism with good success." In Madras there is a Hindu Tract Society. In one of its publications that Society says: "How many hundreds of thousands have these padres turned to Christianity, and keep on turning! How many hundreds of thousands of dear children have they swallowed up! Oh, over how many more have they cast their nets! Is there no learned pundit to be secured for money who will crush these Christians?" Incidents of this kind imply that Christian missions are actually felt to be an aggressive and advancing force.

FROM the Congo the Rev. W. H. Bentley sends home some interesting letters. Describing a visit to San Salvador, after an absence of seven years, he states that the town has grown bigger, great numbers of trading people from the further interior constantly coming and going—"I need not tell you," he continues, "what a joy it was to greet some of our good friends and staunch supporters from the very first, now brethren in Christ Jesus. . . . When I came away a few days ago there was a church of eighteen members, nine men and nine women. Many may think that Christians so recently gathered from among the heathen must be of a very low type. Ignorant they are and must be on many points. . . . But they have an understanding of the main essential points, and the miracle of the new birth has been wrought in them." And the evidence which Mr. Bentley adduces of moral change is very clear. Further, he says:—"The church has from the first been taught to contribute for Christian work. Every Sunday they put their beads, knives, and cloth into the box which stands near the door of the chapel. In this way they are able to support an evangelist, who visits the neighbouring towns three days in the week; the other three days he does carpentering work on the station for his bare food. They collect more than enough for this, and at present have actually funds in hand. The real need is men to do the work. The little church is so young that it is not surprising that there are not many to hand who can undertake regularly evangelistic work. Other of the members go out on Sundays and at other times to visit the towns around, but only one at present is answerable to the church for so many days per week." This is an infant African church, and yet missions are "a failure!"

THE revised version of the Malagasy Bible has now been completed and printed. As one result of the presence of the French in Madagascar, an import duty of ten per cent. is imposed on the Scriptures entering the island ports. Complaints are also made of tedious delays in getting supplies of the Scriptures. Meanwhile, the dearth of copies had become very trying to the missionaries. The Scriptures are the only books, with the exception of school books, which the Malagasy buy in any quantities.

FROM Amoy we hear of a Chinese lady doctor engaged in missionary work. The Rev. J. Sadler writes:—"All who are interested in the salvation of Chinese women will like to know something of the history of Dr. King, a young and

talented Chinese lady trained in America. She is a protégée of Dr. McCartee, a venerable missionary, well-known both to Chinese and foreign governments. Dr. King came with Dr. and Mrs. McCartee to Amoy last year. Since then she has worked at the language, and established her hospital on the latest and most approved ideas. The Chinese are said to approve of the extensive cleanliness required, the payment of a small fee on entry, &c. It is early days, but there is said to be a good deal of satisfaction. A woman doctor for women, and that woman a Chinese for the Chinese—this is an inspiration. . . . Dr. King is the first Chinese woman educated abroad, and she gained the first degree in her medical college."

THE Salvation Army has despatched another fifty "officers" to recruit abroad—twenty to India, and thirty to Holland, Sweden, Germany, and Canada. At the farewell meeting in Exeter Hall, those for India were attired in the native dress. All of them are Canadians. They have been selected out of three hundred volunteers, and have been sent to General Booth with 1,200*l.* to pay all their expenses till their arrival in India. The party consists chiefly of young men and women, but it includes an elderly married couple, who have given up their farm and left their grown-up children in the Dominion in order to give themselves for the remainder of their life to the work in India. Great enthusiasm, we are told, was excited in Canada by the mission of three native Cingalese and Hindoos to plead for their country. The Canadians have also offered their second officer in command with a contingent of soldiers to open up Japan to the army, undertaking to pay all expenses. Captain Mahktaherer, the native Indian woman, delivered an address in English. "She was shocked at hearing that some clergymen and ministers went to horse-races and theatres. Why did not they get converted themselves before trying to convert others? And why did not young men give up betting and cricket and football and go and try to win for Jesus her own dark country?"

This enthusiasm will need wisdom for direction. Canon Taylor's criticisms on the Church Missionary Society having been reprinted, and privately circulated in the interests of the Salvation Army, the methods of the latter have been subjected in turn to inquiry. The *Record* objects, for example, on the lower ground of the risks to health and life among its agents in India, and gives some startling statistics. The persecutions to which the Army has been subjected in Neuchâtel and Geneva have been the brutal outbreaks of a mob which does shame to Switzerland.

THE Paris Municipal Council has resolved to remove the cross from the dome of the Pantheon. The spirit which has brought them to this decision appeared in the speech of M. Pérot, who contended that this symbol of the faith was an offence to multitudes both of the living, whose gaze it met daily, and of the dead, who rest beneath the dome. The Council voted the removal by a considerable majority. An objection on the ground of the cost of the undertaking was met by a suggestion that it would be sufficient to saw off the two arms of the cross, and leave the upright as it is! This did not satisfy the majority, who voted fourteen thousand francs (560*l.*) for the necessary charges.

THE services rendered by the "Italian Military Church," to evangelical religion in Italy, should be known to all the churches. Last year the chief exercising grounds of the army were at Viterbo, Bracciano, Imola, Pesaro, Castel Bolognese, and Rimini. These were all visited by Signor Capellini, who before leaving Rome forwarded six large cases of Bibles and Testaments, one to each of these places, so that when he arrived on the field his supplies were ready. He had many most touching meetings with soldiers who had come under the influence of Christian teaching in Rome. Again and again he met with evidence that they had learned to stand fast, and to recommend their faith to others by conduct as well as word. Officers as well as men welcomed his coming. Others, strangers to him, sought to enter into conversation with him, some with sympathy, others controversially. To all he spoke simply of his message, and many of them accepted Bibles from him. The work is carried on in Rome during the winter.

EVANGELICAL Preaching has been made the subject of a conference, which was held the first day at Union Chapel,

Islington, with the Rev. Dr. Allon as chairman, and the second day at the City Temple, under the presidency of the Rev. Dr. Green. At a preliminary evening meeting, Mr. H. H. Fowler, M.P., took the chair, and in speaking of sermons advocated brevity, and the simple exposition of the Bible. The Rev. T. Vincent Tymms spoke on the Evangelical Idea; the Rev. Newman Hall on preaching as an art and a vocation; and the Rev. Dr. Parker on Agnosticism. At the first open meeting Dr. Reynolds read a paper on "Evangelical Religion Contrasted with its Rivals Ancient and Modern;" and Dr. Stoughton followed with one on "What Evangelical Preaching has done in Great Britain," which was supplemented by the Rev. E. E. Jenkins with another on "What Evangelical Preaching has done in Heathen Countries." At the second meeting, Dr. Green in his opening address urged that a thorough and intelligent study of the Scriptures was the most effective antidote to the spirit of scepticism. The Rev. Dr. Clifford read a paper on "Mistakes regarding Evangelical Preaching." The Rev. Dr. Monro Gibson also read a paper on "Evangelical Doctrine Divorced from its Moral and Spiritual Purpose a Mischievous Misrepresentation of the Cross of Christ." Professor W. T. Davison, M.A., of Richmond College, had for his subject "The Breadth and Inclusiveness of Evangelical Doctrine." He refuted the imputation of "narrow" which was so often applied to the Evangelical doctrine. By breadth he said he did not mean indefiniteness of teaching. Preachers were mainly concerned with character and life. And there lay the vindication of the breadth and comprehensiveness of Evangelical preaching. Any preaching which was as broad as the whole compass of human character and comprehensive as the whole range of human life would not be very narrow.

THE value of the work done by the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen is recognised on all hands, yet it is found difficult to maintain the ordinary income on a level with the regular requirements. The missionary energy which has been so ready to equip new ships does not supply a sufficiently steady revenue. It is pointed out that so many contributors have preferred to give "towards a new mission ship," and so few to the general funds, that the Mission is brought face to face with a most serious disproportion between available income and the necessary expenditure involved in effectually maintaining the society's vessels. "The *Queen Victoria* specially furnished with ten hospital cots, and quarters for a resident surgeon, is nearly ready for sea; her sister smack, the *Albert* (generously given at a cost of 3,500*l.* by an anonymous donor), is on the stocks. Yet so low are the general receipts, that even the pioneer hospital ship cannot be despatched on her beneficent errand unless additional funds be speedily forthcoming, while, for the same reason, it may prove needful to delay the completion of the *Albert*." How helpful the ships are, even in the lower range of secular service, may be inferred from the fact that no fewer than 6,575 smackmen, ninety-six of whom were in-patients, have received treatment during last year on board the dispensary mission smacks, while three surgeons were almost constantly afloat.

THE St. Giles's Christian Mission, at its annual supper was once more enabled to present a cheering report. Mr. G. Hatton, in introducing it, referred to a recent charge of Baron Huddleston, in which he attributed the improvement in criminals which had taken place; first, to the firm administration of justice, and, secondly, to those excellent institutions which were formed for the purpose of looking after the interests of prisoners after their release from prison. During the last year this one society provided 12,520 of the 18,000 prisoners discharged from the metropolitan prisons, Wandsworth, Millbank, Holloway, and Pentonville, with breakfasts, of whom 5,400 had been induced to take the temperance pledge. As many as 7,548 men and boys had been assisted. Of these, 118 had been sent to sea, 159 had been sent to the colonies, the mission paying their passage and providing them with an outfit; 297 had been sent home to their friends; and 6,974 had been relieved with gifts of money, clothes, boots, stock, etc., and by being provided with employment. Statistics are in reality a very insufficient measure of the good which has been achieved. It is now proposed to provide a series of teas, at which women of the lowest and most abandoned class may be brought into contact with Christian friends.