

# THE MISSIONARY SITUATION IN CONGO

By ALFRED STONELAKE

**THE SOCIETIES AT WORK.** The commencement of missionary work in Congo coincided with the discovery by Stanley of the course of the river. It is a significant example of God's over-ruling providence that the Baptist Missionary Society in September 1877 publicly accepted the challenge of Mr Robert Arthington to begin work in Congo, only three weeks before the proclamation of Stanley's discovery did so much to prepare the way for its accomplishment. That discovery also provided the opportunity and inspiration for forming the Livingstone Inland Mission, which thereby shared the honour of being the pioneer of missionary work in Congo. After six years, however, it was handed over to what is now known as the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society (A.B.F.M.S.), the Swedish members of the Livingstone Inland Mission forming themselves into the Swedish Mission.

A mere glance at the accompanying maps (pp. 322-323) will suffice to show that the district between the mouth of the river is, from the missionary point of view, fully occupied if not actually congested. It was only natural that the early arrivals should select the nearest convenient sites for their work. Difficulties of travel and transport in the hilly Lower Congo, economy of freightage and of time occupied in reaching the destinations, coupled with the unfriendly attitude of the natives, would account for their choice. It is hardly surprising, then, that four societies settled in that district, the Christian and Missionary Alliance of America (C. and M.A.) and the Swedish Mission on the north

bank, the American and English Baptists on the south bank of the river.

The 'scramble for Africa' by the European Powers which soon afterwards took place roused the Christian Church to the necessity of preaching the Gospel in the interior. The English Baptists had from the beginning sought to establish a chain of stations across the continent as far as Uganda, and the American Baptists also went forward along the main river. The Regions Beyond Missionary Union, under the name of the Congo Balolo Mission, made itself responsible for the basin of the river Lulongo and its tributaries and has done splendid work; the American Presbyterians and a society of English Brethren known as the Westcott Brothers Mission settled down to work in the Kasai district. Then followed a pause of seven years before the Disciples of America (Foreign Christian Missionary Society) came to begin work in the equator district.

Thirteen more years passed before any other mission appeared on the scene, and then, at the beginning of this present decade, there began a really wonderful expansion of missionary effort, all the more remarkable from the fact that most of the progress took place during the period of the war. In 1911 there were only forty-eight mission stations in Congo, but by the end of 1917 seven additional societies had entered the country, three other societies were arranging to do so, and thirty-three new stations had been opened. The heralds of the Cross went in all directions. Dr Lambuth brought a party of Episcopal Methodists from the Southern States of America to the Kasai, where the Mennonites (Congo Inland Mission) had recently preceded them. One cannot help here expressing keen sympathy for the Belgian Protestants who were only prevented by the war from carrying out their intention of occupying territory in this region.

All these societies enter by the mouth of the river, but of late years others have been coming from every direc-

tion, making co-operation more difficult. Several members of Arnot's Mission trekked across country through Angola into Katanga where one of their colleagues, Mr Dan Crawford, had long been labouring. The Episcopal Methodists of the Northern States of America overflowed their borders in Rhodesia and came into this region. During the past two years a Pentecostal Mission has also opened a station here. The Africa Inland Mission, having separate committees in America and the British Isles but working as one mission, found itself cramped in British East Africa. In pursuance of its policy not to build on the foundations of others, it crossed Lake Albert and is establishing stations in two directions, one lying between Mahagi and Stanleyville being worked by Americans, whilst the other section worked by British missionaries is stretching out towards Lake Chad. Mr C. T. Studd, impressed by the burning words of Dr Karl Kumm on the subject of the Mohammedan menace, came up the Nile with Mr Alfred Barclay Buxton and founded the Heart of Africa Mission just south of the Africa Inland Mission; by the end of 1918 there were seven stations. The Rev. W. Haas, formerly of the Africa Inland Mission, started the Memorial Baptist Mission working on the borders of the French and Belgian Congo, but in the latter territory this is in association with the Heart of Africa Mission. Last year some members of the Brethren persuasion from America began what is known as the Ubangi-Shari Mission.

In all, there are fifteen Protestant societies working in Congo, occupying seventy-eight stations, with a staff of more than four hundred missionaries. Five of these societies are British, one is Swedish, and the others are American, many of them being of high standing in the councils of missions. They represent almost every shade of Protestant faith and practice, and the workers in connexion with them come from all parts of the Christian world. It is therefore no mere figure of speech to say that, with the exception of the Anglican communion, almost

the whole Christian world is represented in the evangelization of Congo.

**STANDARD OF MISSION PRACTICE.** Although various stages of development and progress naturally mark these missions, they have in many respects a common policy. They are distinctly evangelical, preaching 'Christ and Him crucified' in the language of the people or in one of the *lingua franca* considered effective for the purpose. All the missions demand public confession of sin, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Candidates for membership are expected to attend an inquirers' class, generally for not less than twelve months, and to give sufficient evidence of change of heart, earnestness of purpose and adequate knowledge. In the churches there is a self-imposed law which is almost universal that all members should be total abstainers, and that the male members must be monogamists. Moreover it is expected that the native Church shall fully support the teachers and evangelists, only the upkeep of the central stations in the mission and the missionaries being chargeable to foreign funds.

In a number of cases it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure sufficient teachers of the best kind under the inadequate inducements offered, and an application has been made to some of the home boards for financial assistance on a declining scale in regard to the educational work done in the villages. This does not mean that the principle of self-support is being discredited, but that there are wide-open doors which may not be permanent, such willingness to receive the gospel message, and such requests for teachers beyond the power of the native Church to meet financially, that present help would mean future advantage and economy. A careful record is kept of all native funds and a minimum contribution is fixed, which is less in the case of the women, every effort being made to secure the fulfilment of financial obligations. The tithe system has been tried in some of the missions, but this is found difficult of operation in a land where the coinage system of European

countries has only partially replaced the native practice of exchange in which the actual profit becomes difficult of assessment. The American Presbyterians overcome this difficulty by an arrangement whereby the produce tithed is set apart by the owner as soon as obtained, gathered by the church officers and sold by them at the public market, the proceeds being put in the church treasury.

Great importance is attached to reading. Where a school exists in the neighbourhood, any candidate not incapable of learning is expected to attend and acquire a certain amount of proficiency, in order that the ability to read God's Word may be secured as far as possible.

It will thus be seen that the standard of church membership is high. There have been cases where a lower standard and looser practice have been tolerated, but the inevitable result has sooner or later been disappointment and a necessity for reconstruction. It may be said that those churches have been most successful which have been able to keep strict watch over their inquirers and to develop corporate responsibility in their members and officers. It is a matter of heartfelt thanksgiving that at the close of 1917 there were 35,000 church members, and 25,000 inquirers seeking membership. A wonderful change has come over the conditions of things in Congo for this to have been possible, and mighty forces are now at work for the evangelization of that dark land.

**EDUCATION.** Education must necessarily have a prominent place in any mission work among backward races. Whenever a native preacher goes into a village to settle he conducts an elementary school, in which reading, singing, memorizing and often writing play an important part. At the station school there is also taught dictation, composition and simple arithmetic, and in a number of cases elementary French, though it is uncertain to what extent the latter obtains. A further stage is reached by most missions in the effort to equip native teachers for their work. Special gatherings are arranged as may be most

convenient for this purpose, and there is a growing conviction that every society should establish its training school in each of the language areas. The most conspicuous example is at Yakusu (B.M.S.) where in 1917 each of the 280 teachers spent from six to eight weeks in one of the five classes. At the close of each class an examination was held, which determined for each man the class he would be permitted to attend the following year.

When a society is in a district having one predominant language this scheme is amplified. The American Presbyterians have a training school for 150 teachers who promise to remain for a three years' course. For the first two years the teachers are engaged half-time on agricultural work, but the third year the whole time is devoted to study. The Foreign Christian Missionary Society, which has recently changed its name to Disciples of Christ Congo Mission, has made great strides in its training school work, and the Swedish Mission is likewise credited with being thorough and well advanced in its educational work.

The only inter-mission training school is that at Kimpese on the Lower Congo, where the American and British Baptists have united. A report of the work of the students from 1908 to 1913, with an investigation into the subsequent history of these students, was recently published. As compared with such institutions in other mission fields the results were considered very encouraging, but the number of students taking advantage of the institution was not as great as could be wished, nor as many as could be accommodated. Perhaps the reason is that those who have finished their course do not receive salaries commensurate with the higher efficiency attained at Kimpese.

Missionary educational work is indispensable and imperative if the native churches are to grow and develop. The government of French Congo has had schools established at all its more important *postes*, and insists that all mission school work must be conducted in French, though the native vernacular may be used at the services for

divine worship. In the Belgian Congo no such language restriction obtains, and only in the largest of its centres have schools been started by the government. There are rumours current, however, that the Belgian government will shortly work out a scheme of native education. It is earnestly hoped that this will in no way militate against the gratuitous efforts of the various missions. An inter-mission committee was formed in 1918, in order to co-ordinate the curricula of the various schools and to work out the best possible programme of education, and to place its experience at the disposal of the government.

**INDUSTRIAL MISSION WORK.** The primitive stage of the African in social evolution, and the value of industrial training as a character building force, combine to emphasize its importance. There is hardly a society of long experience in Congo which has not found it essential. The Swedish Mission is the only society known to the writer which makes this branch of work a part of the ordinary school curriculum. Some of the newer societies have not yet been able to do anything along these lines but are in favour of it. The Congo section of the Africa Inland Mission has done no industrial training as far as we know, but at Kijabi in British East Africa it is being carried on by them extensively. The Heart of Africa Mission has recently appealed for the necessary equipment to develop this important branch of work.

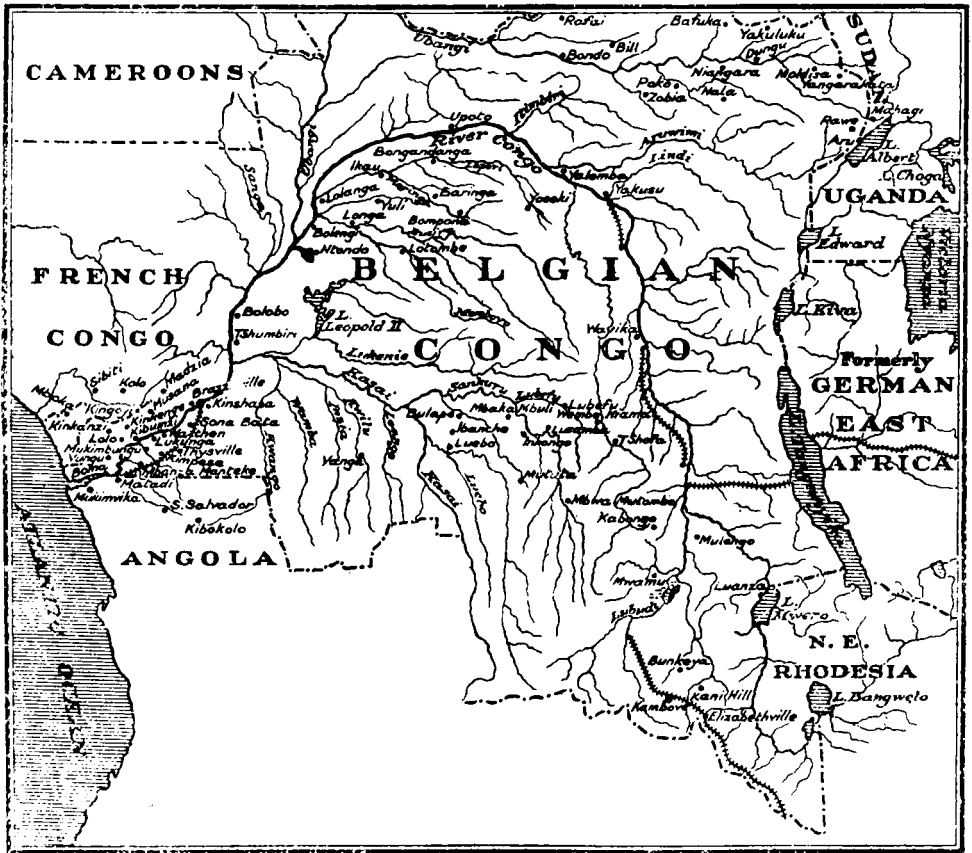
The effect of such training is seen in the better built houses in the vicinity of mission stations and in the simple furniture of which the homes can now boast, in addition to the effect upon the character of those thus trained. More, these mission-trained lads are now being engaged as engineers, carpenters, brickmakers and bricklayers. Lord Leverhulme tells of typists and an analytical chemist in the service of the Huileries du Congo Belge who are the fruits of mission training, and goes on to say, 'My own estimate of the value of Christian missions may be gathered from the fact that we are anxious to engage as many lads trained by missionaries

as we can possibly secure.' In many of the best homes in Congo may be seen samples of cane lounges, tables, chairs and racks, made at the Bolobo Mission (B.M.S.).

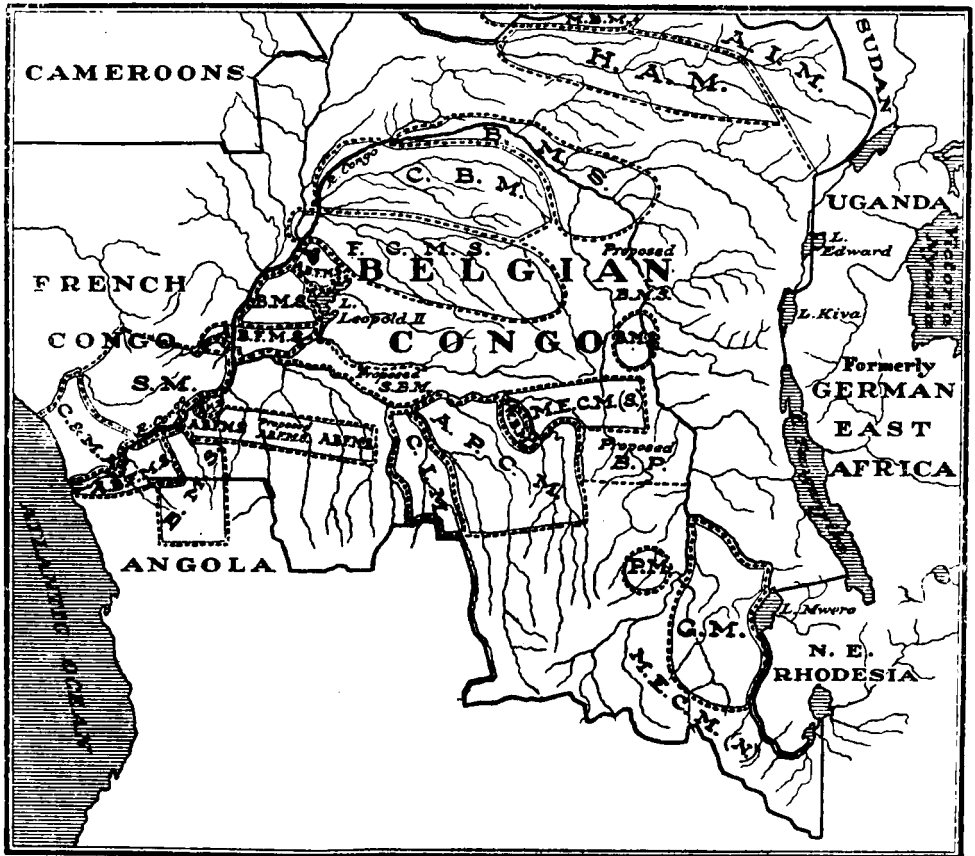
Undoubtedly the best developed mission industrial work is to be seen at Luebo (American Presbyterian), where the mission undertakes to provide the material and erect permanent buildings. The station is well equipped with modern plant and the training given is worthy of high praise. Attention is given to printing, skin tanning and shoemaking, and so much importance is attached to agriculture that the church refuses to receive a man who has not a garden of his own, on the ground that 'If any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel' (1 Tim. v. 8). Whatever may be thought of such an attitude, their development of agricultural resources received recently a splendid justification. In February 1918, a conference of the Protestant missionary societies was held there; indeed, it was the only possible place. Whilst the other missions were anxious as to food supplies owing to the war embargo on the export of European foods, Luebo was enabled to offer hospitality to seventy-three missionaries for eleven days, to send the three mission steamers away from the conference with a liberal supply of food, and to continue its own society committee meetings, because the food was largely grown or manufactured on the mission. The lesson will not soon be lost on those who were privileged to be present. It is safe to say that nearly all our missions have failed to recognize sufficiently the value of agriculture. In this respect they are altogether outdistanced by the Roman Catholic missions, to the unmistakable advantage of the latter in the eyes of the government. Each society, or group of societies where they work in one district, should have a central school where this industry could be taught, as it would be a very practical way of helping to foster the principle of self-support for the work of the Church.



**UNOCCUPIED TERRITORY.** The maps which accompany this article have been prepared to show how much is being attempted by Protestant missions towards the evangelization of Congoland, and to show the portion of the country which remained unoccupied at the close of 1917. The map on this page simply records the Protestant mission stations occupied by white missionaries, and the river systems which are often natural boundaries of mission spheres, and takes no account of government and trading centres or of Roman Catholic missions. The opposite map indicates the territory within which the various societies



PROTESTANT MISSION STATIONS OCCUPIED BY WHITE MISSIONARIES



NAMES OF PROTESTANT MISSIONARY SOCIETIES WORKING IN CONGOLAND

A.B.F.M.S.	. American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society.	G.M.	. . . Garanganze Mission (Arnot's Mission).
A.I.M.	. . . Africa Inland Mission.	H.A.M.	. . . Heart of Africa Mission.
A.P.C.M.	. . . American Presbyterian Congo Mission.	M.B.M.	. . . Memorial Baptist Mission (American).
B.M.S.	. . . Baptist Missionary Society.	M.E.C.M. (North)	Methodist Episcopal Congo Mission (Northern States).
B.P.M.	. . . Belgian Protestant Mission (proposed).	M.E.C.M. (South)	Methodist Episcopal Congo Mission (Southern States).
C. & M.A.	. . . Christian and Missionary Alliance (American).	P.M.	. . . Pentecostal Mission.
C.B.M.	. . . Congo Balolo Mission.	S.B.M.	. . . Swedish Baptist Mission (proposed).
C.I.M.	. . . Congo Inland Mission (Mennonites).	S.M.	. . . Swedish Mission.
F.C.M.S., now D.C.C.M.	Foreign Christian Missionary Society, now become the Disciples of Christ Congo Mission.	U.S.M.	. . . Ubangi-Shari Mission.
		W.B.M.	. . . Westcott Brothers Mission.

consider themselves responsible for spreading the Gospel. Unfortunately the map does not clearly indicate the boundary between the French and Belgian Congo in the north, which should follow the line of the Ubangi river, and it is possible that the disposal of the German Colonies may make an alteration in the eastern frontier. It might be of interest here to note that the original Kongo was practically the area now worked by the four societies near the mouth of the river, but the name now denotes the land governed by the French, Belgian and Portuguese authorities in the Congo basin, and represents a territory larger than Europe.

Although other societies have got a footing in French Congo, comparatively little is being done there except by the Swedish Mission. Information concerning the possibilities of work in that colony is very meagre, and there is great need of more definite information.

Progress has been rapid in the adjoining territory of Belgian Congo since Professor J. du Plessis was able to write, 'In 1914 I journeyed for five months from the Benue to the Welle without seeing a single Protestant missionary.' But there is still a region between the present confines of the Baptist and the Heart of Africa Mission yet to be occupied. On the eastern side, the territory lying between the main river and Lake Tanganyika presents another immense field. From Ponthierville to beyond Stanleyville are the Bakumus, with a population of a quarter of a million. The English Baptists contemplate placing another station in that district, but this is only a section of the land available. The Rev. W. Millman wrote, 'Along the route of the proposed Northern Lakes Railway the Roman Catholics have directed their energies for some years past, and have practically closed the road,' so that new workers would find the sphere rather difficult. There is another unoccupied region on the upper reaches of the Kasai river, extending towards the Portuguese frontier and even towards the British frontier on the south, and

still another district between Stanley Pool and the Kasai practically untouched.

A most praiseworthy investigation was made by the Foreign Christian Missionary Society, prior to its fusion into the Disciples of Christ Congo Mission, as to the unoccupied territory of its district. A survey was made by five missionaries in the Ubangi district, covering a period of three and a half months, with an additional fortnight for working its data into a report. Soon afterwards a second party spent four months in an opposite direction making an earnest study of the whole unoccupied part of their district. The effect of all this upon the home board was to secure a ten years' programme, during which their whole field should be adequately manned, and a promise of forty-five new workers within the next five years.

Surely the situation in Congo to-day demands the faithful recognition of responsibility from every society working therein. Ponder over what some of the missionaries working there have been saying of late: 'I have tramped for seventy days between the Kwilu and Bakali, a distance of seven or eight hundred miles, and did not see a single Protestant teacher or Christian.' 'The Banda tribes number about two and a half millions, with only one baptized man among them.' 'In the Bangandu country there are 80,000 to 100,000 people without a single witness for our Lord and Master.' 'It is estimated that there are 100 tribes with a total population of 13,000,000 to 20,000,000 yet unreached.' 'But while we are able to ascertain the names of the tribes which have not had an opportunity of receiving the Gospel, we do not know to what extent the tribes among which Christian work is being done are touched.' Is there not in all this an insistent call for a scientific survey of the field such as is being carried out in India, and an irresistible plea for advance? This is not a matter which the missionaries on the field can carry out at their own charges, or on their own responsibility. It is

therefore a matter to which the leaders at home must see. May they be willing in the day of God's power !

#### CONGO CONFERENCES AND CONTINUATION COMMITTEE.

Congo was the first of the great fields to recognize the value of co-operation, its first conference having been held at Stanley Pool in 1902. The conferences have been occasions of spiritual uplift, but have also been intensely practical in dealing with every phase of work done by the missions. Cognizance has always been taken of current events, and the protests raised in the days of Congo atrocities had a marked effect. And when a brighter day dawned for Congo, the conference was equally anxious to assist in every good work for the benefit of the country, and it is on record concerning the 1911 conference that 'the government had accepted all, or nearly all, the suggestions made.'

All Protestant missionaries are entitled to attend the Congo conferences, and any action is distinctly understood to be the expression of individuals gathered in conference, and not as committing the societies to which they belong. In 1911 a local Continuation Committee was formed, in order that Congo might be linked up with the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910. Any action taken by this committee has to be submitted to the General Conference for approval. Even as at present constituted, the position of this Continuation Committee might be greatly strengthened if the members were all elected by the popular vote of the various field committees, and if the home boards could see their way to give it their blessing, and to urge their representatives to support it actively and loyally as a potential factor of the highest importance.

The conference has its own periodical, *The Congo Mission News*, which is highly valued by the missionaries as a medium of fraternity and help in mutual service. It has formed an education committee as already mentioned, studied the country with a view to its complete occupation, given advice as to suitable localities for a new mission, expressed itself on matters of civil law and social uplift ;

and as a means of securing a consensus of opinion on the ordinary problems of missionary work, and of obtaining the benefit of the experience, counsel and help of the missionaries of long standing, it is invaluable.

**PROBLEMS.** The problems just referred to are so many and so great that it seems rather like unwisdom to deal with them at the close of an article of this length. Nevertheless, it is necessary to state some of them in order that the gravity of the situation may be apparent, and the need of immediate action emphasized.

(1) There is the problem of the declining population, which resolves itself into a plea for medical missions. Let Bishop Lambuth, who has had long experience as a medical missionary in China, state the case. 'I make the assertion without hesitation or fear of challenge, that medical missions are more imperatively needed in Africa than in any other field. . . . The need for the Christian physician in Africa is due to the ignorance of the natives; to the disregard of the simplest laws of health; to climatic conditions with their attendant fevers; to the exposure of naked bodies to the bites of insects; to food improperly prepared and often bolted down without mastication after long marches . . . the invasion of parasites of every kind; injury from the attacks of wild animals and the cupidity of the witch doctor. These and more make Africa, if not the greatest, certainly the neediest field for medical missions in all the world.' Yet there are only eleven medical missionaries in the whole of Congo, and some of these have been engaged in war work in Europe.

(2) The language problem is a growing one, and must sooner or later be faced unitedly. Let us hope it will not then be too late for us to exercise any influence. Our aim has always been to give the people the Scriptures in the speech in which they were born. It stands to reason that government officials and traders cannot use these languages, their movements being so uncertain and their time in the country generally so short. It is equally

certain that the government cannot go on for ever without a recognized official language. Which shall it be? The writer has a conviction that had the language experts amongst us tackled the problem with the spirit of the late Rev. W. H. Stapleton in his attempt to regularize the *lingua franca*, Lingala, instead of devoting their time to additional local languages, they might have done great things for Congo. The Catholic party, in addition to possessing French as their mother tongue, have also made use of this *lingua franca*, and, in view of the growth of the trading centres and the intermingling of the people, the advantage will be increasingly with them.

(3) As a natural sequence comes the city problem. In their modest little villages our teachers exercise a really powerful ministry, and the results of their labours constitute one of the most encouraging chapters of the missionary enterprise. But there is a tendency, by missionary and native teacher alike, to fight shy of the large riverine settlements filled with natives from all parts, coast men, white traders and imported wickedness. It is a discouraging fact that our Protestant missions have never more than touched the great centres of Congo. As this is being written the Baptist Missionary Society is arranging to send a deputation to Congo, and this is one of the most pressing problems it will be called upon to face. There are five other societies which have each a similar problem in the large centres where they work. Will they not also take heed to the seriousness of the situation confronting them, and attempt something really adequate to the needs of these centres, for the sake of our Lord who had compassion on the multitudes? If not, the neglect may prove their undoing, for it is not in the small villages but at the strategic points of greatest importance that the battles are ultimately won. Let anyone make inquiries as to the number of Christians at these centres, and it will make him think.

(4) From this stage it is but a step to the government

problem. With great thankfulness we testify that there has been of recent years a very gratifying movement on the part of the government and of the missionaries in the direction of a better understanding, finer appreciation and increasing sympathy. Nevertheless it must be said that more than one society has of late felt compelled to protest against certain actions of the authorities, in which Roman Catholic partisanship has been unfairly manifest to the detriment of Protestant mission work. Just to take one instance: Why should the government authorities attempt to break up the town of Luebo, where there is the largest Protestant mission station in Congo, on the pretext that the people are vagabonds, and then leave Lusambo, which is similar, larger, but Roman Catholic, alone? Indeed, why should commerce be allowed to attract natives from all parts of the Congo, and religion not be able to keep them, even when they come from the district of the same Commissaire?

Again, on what grounds can Belgium, after herself making such a great fight for independence in the present war, deprive Congo natives of the right to select their own religion and their own religious teachers in Concessionaire territories? This is an interference with the inalienable responsibility of the human soul, and is calculated to produce want of confidence and trouble, and ought to be revoked.

(5) In conclusion, we would refer to the religious problem. There is the Mohammedan menace, which though practically unfelt as yet in Congo is, on the testimony of leaders in adjacent territory, surely drawing near. We have already seen that almost the whole outer portion of our field is still untouched by Protestant effort. Dr Karl Kumm and others have declared that in the centre of Africa Mohammedanism is gaining ten converts for every single convert won to Christianity. Knowing how difficult it is to win those who have once embraced Mohammedanism, and how richly the work has been blessed in Congo



where there has been no such dead-weight acting against us, is there not here a challenge and a clarion call to the Christian Church to possess the land completely for our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, before the menace is actually in our midst ?

And if there is one influence that is more to be dreaded than any other, it is—to quote from the Findings of the New York Conference on the Missionary Occupation of Africa, November 1917—‘the sudden impinging upon the native in many parts of a European civilization, before whose moral temptations and economic pressure he must go down to racial ruin unless that civilization be interpreted to him in terms of its highest sanctions, which are found only in the religion of Jesus Christ.’

Put into a sentence or two, the present missionary situation in Congo is this: Wonderful progress has been made for which all must be devoutly thankful. On the other hand, the ever-changing conditions of life in Congo demand a much more active propaganda if past gains are to be conserved and fresh victories won.

It is earnestly to be desired that an influential deputation may be sent to represent the Edinburgh Conference at the next Congo conference in November 1921, in order to examine the conditions at first-hand and to help the missionaries to solve the problems and face the tasks with adequate forces of workers and equipment.

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