

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE IN THE MISSION FIELD

THE place given at the Edinburgh Conference to the consideration of Christian literature in the mission field was altogether inadequate. This was due not to any lack of appreciation of the importance of the subject, but solely to the limitations of time and space on the programme. The Continuation Committee therefore made it one of their first duties to appoint an international committee to make a study of the whole problem. The special committee both in its European and American sections met as soon as practicable, and found that their first work must be to survey the whole mission field in order to ascertain how far its needs for literature are already met by existing organizations. A list of questions was sent to 275 societies at home and abroad, with varying results. Whenever possible the questions were misunderstood. Some societies gave the most meagre information, and that not always accurate; and some societies, even important ones, neglected to send any reply at all. The information received has, however, been amplified from other sources, and especially by a study of annual reports. While this present survey cannot claim to be quite complete or absolutely up-to-date, no pains have been spared to make it as full and accurate as possible with the resources available.

The survey does not take into consideration the work of the Bible societies—they are providing the Scriptures for the whole field and there are no complaints of inadequacy. It uses the term 'Christian literature' in the widest sense, including all printed matter needed for the development and expansion of the Christian Church, from

tracts, leaflets and school books up to such publications as in the strict sense of the word may be designated 'literature.'

Before outlining the survey of the mission field, we may remind our readers of the organizations which have their headquarters at the home base and exist for the purpose of providing Christian literature chiefly if not entirely for use abroad. Some of them are denominational, and others interdenominational.

The outstanding denominational organization—and the oldest—is the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, founded in 1698. One of its great aims and achievements has been the providing of Christian literature for the missions of the Anglican church. It issues prayer and service books, catechisms and hymn books in a great number of languages, and its catalogue embraces a considerable range of other books—devotional, educational, theological, exegetical.

Though they have not organized literature societies, some of the other churches have denominational publishing houses and book rooms at the home base, which render considerable service to the mission field by the publication of its special literature, though their work is generally done on a commercial basis.

Foremost among the interdenominational societies is the Religious Tract Society, London, founded in 1799. It was the pioneer and remains the premier society of its kind, and has been the parent of many similar societies all over the world. Its main object is 'to promote the circulation, gratuitously or otherwise, of religious tracts, books and treatises in foreign countries as well as throughout the British dominions.' By gifts of paper and quantities of its own publications, and by annual grants in money as generous as its funds permit, it supports the daughter tract societies of the mission field especially in India and China. Its beneficence also extends to many missionaries all over the world. The income available for mis-

sionary work is a little over £20,000. It has printed books and tracts in 273 languages, dialects and characters.

The American Tract Society, New York, founded in 1825, works on lines similar to those of the London Religious Tract Society, circulating 'religious tracts (including volumes and periodicals) calculated to receive the approbation of all evangelical Christians.' Its publications are in over 174 languages, and it gives valuable help over a wide section of the mission field.

The Upper Canada Religious Tract and Book Society, Toronto, founded in 1833, gives help to literature work in China.

Besides the tract societies there are the Christian literature societies. The Christian Literature Society for China has its headquarters in Shanghai—its British organizations being little more than auxiliaries for raising funds—and it is referred to under China. The Christian Literature Society for India has its headquarters in London. Though it gives help in Africa, and throughout the Moslem field, its main operations are in India, and it is best considered under the heading of the Survey of India.

Bearing in mind these important organizations at the base we may now review the present situation in the various mission fields, and it is convenient to deal with them in the order in which they are arranged in Vol. i of the Edinburgh Conference Report.

JAPAN

'As regards general reading, activity in publication, press and copyright laws, Japan has reached a state of advancement perhaps without parallel outside the Christian nations.' The needs of the Christian movement are urgent.

The missions acting on their own initiative, the Japanese church, and some publishing houses apart from missions, have contributed to meet the need. The Society for

Promoting Christian Knowledge has a number of Japanese works on its list.

The Japan Book and Tract Society, Tokyo, which linked up some smaller agencies in 1898, issues about 1½ million books, tracts, papers and cards per annum. Its total average income in seven recent years has been £1630 per annum, of which the American Tract Society contributed £70 per annum and the Religious Tract Society £506 per annum.

The supply of literature is altogether insufficient and no Christian worker is satisfied. The Conference of Federated Missions has therefore established the Christian Literature Society of Japan—an organization including the Japanese churches. 'It is catholic in spirit and neither its members nor those supporting it are to be regarded as necessarily holding all the views presented in the books issued.' It is interdenominational and will 'encourage the promulgation of the ideas embodied in the literature of those denominational bodies represented in Japan, though as a matter of course strict sectarianism will be avoided.' Already two missionaries have been set apart for this new undertaking—one as executive secretary and the other to organize the distribution of literature. The missions and boards represented in the conference are asked to provide the income out of their ordinary funds on the basis of the number of missionaries each has in Japan, and so far they have responded well. This society is not yet in full working order, but students of missions should watch the experiment closely. In applying co-operation to Christian literature Japan sets an example.

KOREA

Literature has a special sphere of usefulness in this field, and yet 'the variety of books and range of Christian literature is lamentably small compared with China or Japan.' There is already an excellent organization on a

co-operative basis in the country—the Korea Religious Tract Society, founded 1893, and managed by a board of twenty trustees representing the missions. In 1913, 1,080,699 copies of publications (including leaflets) were issued. The society owns good premises for its headquarters in Seoul. The salary of the manager is partly met by the American Tract Society (£90 per annum) and the Religious Tract Society (£100 per annum). These grants are not permanently assured. Monetary help is at present needed for expansion, but ‘self support within a limited number of years seems a possibility.’

CHINA

The influence of literature as a means of propagating the Christian religion is perhaps greater in China than in other mission fields. This fact has been recognized by individual missionaries from the days of Morrison onwards, and acting on their own initiative they have made invaluable contributions to the Christian literature of the country. The increase in the demand for literature in recent years is illustrated by the success of the Commercial Press in Shanghai. It was started in 1897, has published over 4000 volumes, and has fully a hundred scholars of repute and influence in educational circles engaged in writing school and other books. It is a non-christian press but is altogether friendly to Christian enterprise. As it is a commercial house it cannot undertake to circulate books at a loss. The main sources of definitely Christian literature are and must continue to be the missionary and tract and literature societies. Comparatively few missionary societies spend money on the production of literature. Usually their output is denominational in character: it is quite exceptional for one mission to produce literature which meets an interdenominational need. There appear to be only about twelve missionaries devoting their whole time to literary work, and some of these are no longer

supported by their own societies. There are many, however, reported as giving a substantial part of their time to these pursuits. The activity of the societies is indicated by the fact that they have established at least twenty-six mission presses in the provinces of China—presses ranging in size from a mere hand machine up to that of the United Presbyterian Church of America, in Shanghai, which has 216 Chinese employees, besides binders, and issues on an average a hundred million pages annually.

There are eight tract societies, which, with date of foundation, are as follows: the Canton and Hong Kong Religious Tract Society (1855); the Central China Religious Tract Society, Hankow (1876); the Chinese Tract Society, Shanghai (1878); the North China Tract Society, Tientsin (1882); the North Fuhkien Religious Tract Society, Foochow (1891); the West China Religious Tract Society, Chungking (1899); the Manchurian Religious Tract Society (1908); the South Fuhkien Religious Tract Society, Amoy (1908). In 1918 these societies issued 48 new books, besides leaflets, and circulated 3,081,587 publications, realizing by sales \$24,178. Some of the societies are quite small, and at least two are distributing agencies only. The most vigorous is that in Hankow, which has excellent plant, and has recently been amalgamated with that in Shanghai. Apart from receipts from sales, the Religious Tract Society provides 72 per cent of the total income of these organizations, the American Tract Society 10 per cent, while local contributions amount to 18 per cent. They are independent of the parent societies in administration. Dr. Darroch superintends the interests of the Religious Tract Society on the field. The Religious Tract Society has recently given a stimulus to this work by its China Fund of £20,000, but the home societies have no financial responsibility for those in the field and give no guarantee to them, and the local committees are constantly beset with anxieties.

The Christian Literature Society for China, founded

in Glasgow in 1884, in Shanghai in 1887, and adopting its present name in 1906, has for its object 'the publication and circulation of literature, based on Christian principles, throughout China, her colonies, dependencies, and where-soever Chinese are found : especially periodical literature adapted for all classes, as the resources of the society may permit.' Its range is wider than that contemplated by the tract societies, and it has paid special attention to the *litterati* in official circles. The fact that Dr. Timothy Richard, Dr. MacGillivray, the Rev. Evan Morgan, and a number of other distinguished missionaries (devoting the whole or part of their time) are on the staff, gives the society considerable influence. In 1913 it issued 176,100 publications with 12,982,200 pages, and among its present undertakings is a translation of Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*. Its headquarters are in first rate premises in Shanghai. The income is derived from local donations and subscriptions, grants from missionary societies, and monies raised by the society itself in Glasgow and London, but is altogether inadequate.

These societies have done a great work in China on small resources, and there has been no overlapping. But 'great' is a relative term. The fringe of China's needs has alone been touched. Altogether China does not receive from the home base more than £3500 yearly (in addition to the stipends of missionaries set apart) for literature, and there are perhaps twelve men giving their whole time to the work. There are 500 missionaries devoted to medical missions, and they are for the sick only. 'There was never greater danger lest the press should be used to the detriment of the people of China, and never greater opportunity for successful Christian propaganda by means of literature.' The seriousness of the situation is realized in China, and the new Literature Committee of the China Continuation Committee has decided to call a conference of all literature organizations in the country with a view to the co-ordination and unification of their work ; in

the meantime it is itself grappling with problems of distribution which are perhaps more serious than those of production.

FURTHER INDIA AND THE EAST INDIES

The field is a vast archipelago with a multiplicity of languages, some yet unwritten, and in most parts co-operation is difficult and almost non-existent. In few parts of the world is the supply of literature so scanty, and of that which exists much has become out of date. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and still more the Religious Tract Society and the American Tract Society, have rendered help to individual missions. The missionary societies have presses at Bangkok (Siam) and Cheung Mai (Laos); at Singapore (two presses) in British Malaya; at Menado (North Celebes), as well as in Sumatra, Borneo and other centres of the Dutch East Indies; and at Manila, Vigan and Dumaguete in the Philippines. There is a publication committee of the Evangelical Union at Manila—presumably dealing with literature. There ought to be an interdenominational committee at Singapore, and another in Java—where alone there are thirty million Moslems. In the Dutch East Indies, the Netherlands and Rhenish missions have shown some literary activity, and have at times separated men for the work.

OCEANIA

Again geographical conditions and language difficulties have precluded co-operation in literature. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge has publications in 13 languages, and the Religious Tract Society in 18 languages. There are mission printing presses at Loganeng (New Guinea), Ulu (New Britain), Maré (Loyalty Islands), Suva and Buresala (Fiji), in the Carolines, at Nauru (Marshall Islands), Ocean Island, and Peru (Gilbert Island), in Samoa

(two presses) and at Raiatea (Society Islands). The native Christians in Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia usually pay cost price for the books they purchase, and an increase of literature for these islands may be contemplated without serious expenditure.

INDIA AND CEYLON

Education is rapidly advancing among the three hundred millions of India, where a million new readers are leaving the government schools annually. The decay of India's ancient faiths and the progress of the Christian Church make it necessary that an abundant supply of definitely Christian literature and of general literature written from a Christian standpoint be provided. Individual missionaries on their own responsibility have made an appreciable contribution towards this object, but the need is so great that it can only be adequately met by organized and united effort.

The missionary societies themselves have shown some literary activity, but the extent of it is disappointing. They report that twenty-two of their staff give time to literature; but on good authority it is stated that probably not more than three give their whole time to production, and another gives his whole time to the business side of publication, distribution and general organization. There are sixty-one presses in India, Burma and Ceylon owned by missionary societies; but we must not be misled by this large figure, as some of them are insignificant and ineffective. At least twenty of them sustain an excellent reputation. Such presses as those of the Baptist Missionary Society (Calcutta) with 252 employees, the American Baptists (Rangoon) with 225 employees, the Wesleyan Methodists (Mysore) with 60 employees, and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (Madras) turn out work of the best quality and can compete with commercial prices.

Among the interdenominational societies, there are two groups which call first for consideration—the tract

and the literature societies. There are nine of the former, deriving some support from the home base—in a recent year about £1027 from the Religious Tract Society, and £270 from the American Tract Society. These institutions retain executive power in the field, and are independent of each other. They are scattered over the country as follows : the Punjab Religious Book Society, Lahore (1863), with a Sindh branch (1905); the North India Christian Tract and Book Society, Allahabad (1848); the Gujarat Tract and Book Society, Surat, Bombay (1826); the Bombay Tract and Book Society, Bombay (1827); the Calcutta Christian Tract and Book Society, Calcutta (1823); the Madras Religious Tract and Book Society, Madras (1818); the Bangalore Tract and Book Society, Bangalore (1825); the Malayalam Religious Tract Society, Kottayam (1895); the South Travancore Tract and Book Society. Many of these societies own substantial premises for their headquarters. They limit themselves as a rule to definitely religious literature for Christians and non-Christians. One of the societies defines its theological position as follows : ‘Taking as a model the Religious Tract Society in London, it shall seek to disseminate the evangelical principles of the Reformation, in which Luther, Calvin and Cranmer were agreed : but it shall avoid in its publications such denominational doctrines as are peculiar to any of the evangelical churches.’

The Christian Literature Society for India, London, is the parent of the other group of societies in India. It was founded in 1858 after the Mutiny as the Christian Vernacular Education Society, and subsequently, limiting its operations to literature, adopted its present name. The administrative authority for India ultimately rests with the central committee in London. There is an organizing secretary on the field—the Rev. Joseph Passmore, Madras. The literature issued is educational—school readers, geographies, grammars, etc., and general—biblical, biographical, historical, controversial, social, etc. The total income of this society from voluntary gifts for

the year ending March 31, 1912, was £2380, and the total income from all sources, including sales, £17,433. The nine branches in India are: Punjab, at Lahore; United Provinces, at Allahabad; Marathi, at Poona; Bengal, at Calcutta; Burma, at Rangoon; Orissa, at Cuttack; Madras; Mysore; Ceylon, at Colombo. In at least two centres the society has its own independent premises, but in most cases it shares them with the tract society or one of the missions. The society has issued catalogues of English literature, educational books, and general literature, and it sends out quarterly the *Indian Bookman*, which gives information of what the society is doing all over India.

The Tamil Literature Committee illustrates a valuable development of co-operative work. At the Madras Decennial Missionary Conference of 1902 it was proposed to form representative and permanent literature committees for nineteen language areas in India and Ceylon, with a general committee to unify their work. The scheme did not fully materialize, partly on account of financial difficulties, but most of all because suitable men could not be set apart for the work. The Rev. J. R. Bacon for a time devoted his whole time to the Telugu committee, but the only missionary still entirely given up to the work is the Rev. A. C. Clayton, who is supported for literary work in the Tamil area by the Christian Literature Society for India, the Religious Tract Society, and a few missionary societies.

Among other interdenominational organizations actively interested in Christian literature may be mentioned the Young Men's Christian Associations, which have formed a publishing house apart from the Christian Literature Society for India, and the Union Council for Literature, which is affiliated with the Missionary Education Movement.

Those who are most familiar with literary work in India all unite in paying a high tribute to the various societies and other institutions already named for their

contribution to India in spite of discouragement and difficulty. These efforts have not received sympathetic support even from many of the missions which they have benefited. The neglect of propagandism by Christian literature is surely demonstrated by the fact that after extensive inquiry only about twenty-four missionaries are reported as engaged in literary pursuits, and of these it is questionable whether more than three or four give their whole time, though there is a grand total of 4877 missionary workers in India. The neglect is also demonstrated by the further fact that the Christian Church is not spending more than £4000 to £5000 per annum, of which from £700 to £800 has to be raised on the field, in providing literature for the whole of India and Ceylon. The need is more than urgent, and the existing organizations in India must seek mutual counsel and closer co-operation in facing the problem of production and the more serious problem of distribution, upon which there is not space to dwell in this article. It is satisfactory that the National Missionary Council of India has formed an interim literature committee which is already making a detailed study of the whole situation. In some of the provincial areas also new interest is being manifested and already real progress is reported.

THE NEARER EAST

The matter of literature in the Nearer East is part of the problem of Islam. For the whole Moslem world 'not only is directly religious literature needed, but leading up to it and preparatory to it a literature is needed which will remove prejudice and awaken sympathy in the hearts of those who are wholly unwilling to consider the claims of Christianity.' The Religious Tract Society, the American Tract Society, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Nile Mission Press and the Bible Lands Missions Aid Society have devoted funds to publication work, and

the missionary societies have established presses at Samokov (Bulgaria); Constantinople; Harpoot and Aintab (Asia Minor); Beirut (Syria); Urumiya and Julfa (Persia). The Beirut Press (Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.) has been one of the greatest missionary influences in the Levant. It issues over forty million pages of literature a year, and among its present undertakings is an Arabic commentary on the Old Testament.

AFRICA

On account of its babel of tongues, its religious and racial strife, its illiteracy and backwardness, Africa presents peculiar difficulties. The tract and literature societies at home have stretched out a helping hand to the missionaries. The American Tract Society has given a total of £3000, and the Christian Literature Society for India has contributed school readers. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge provides prayer and hymn books besides other volumes, and the Religious Tract Society, which leads the way in generosity, has forty-two languages of Africa on its catalogue. The dark continent, however, has not had a foremost place in the plans of any of these societies. Some of the missions have turned to their own church book-rooms for help, e.g. the Wesleyan mission has used the Methodist Book-room in London for publications in eleven languages.

Africa cannot be treated as a whole in the question of literature. We must consider it sectionally.

NORTH AFRICA (*from Morocco to Somaliland*)

In North East Africa the missions issue leaflets, newspapers and magazines, and there is a mission press at Asmara (Eritrea). The most active organization in the field is the Nile Mission Press, Cairo, started in 1905 on an interdenominational basis. This has steadily increased its

output, which in 1911-2 reached eleven and a half million pages. The publications are mostly in Arabic. In the year referred to, the work was subsidized by £948 from the United Kingdom and £171 from America. The Lucknow Conference on Missions to Moslems (1911) appointed a special committee on Christian literature, which has done effective service. The Lucknow, Cairo, Beirut and Constantinople presses will work more or less in conjunction, and a scheme is being matured for distribution, which is 'the crux of the literature problems.'

North West Africa draws its main literature supplies from the same sources as North East Africa.

WEST AFRICA (*including the West and Central Sudan*)

From Senegambia to Nigeria, the missionary societies, here as in almost the whole continent, have produced only such literature as they have absolutely needed for their own purposes. Mission presses have been established at Monrovia (Liberia); Accra (Gold Coast); Shonga (Northern Nigeria); Onitsha, Oron, Ibuno, and Duke Town (Southern Nigeria). There are some flourishing mission book-rooms in this district. From Gabun to German South West Africa, the missions have presses at Samkita (Gabun); Bolenge, Balobo, Ngombe, Loanza, Tumba and four other centres (Congo); Kamundonga, Malange, San Salvador, Banza Manteka, and Londe (Angola); Onipa (German South West Africa) and a press in Hereroland. Two or three missionaries have been set aside for literature work by continental societies in this area.

SOUTH AFRICA (*including South Central Africa*)

In British South Africa there are mission presses at Genadendal, Lovedale and Zonnebloem (Cape Province); Morija (Basutoland); Adams, Dundee, Empangweni and Port Shepstone (Natal) and Modderfontein (Transvaal). The

literary work of the Paris Missionary Society at Morija, and of the United Free Church of Scotland at Lovedale has been extensive and of high merit. The Church of the Province of South Africa, the South Africa Missionary Society (Wesleyan), the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the Swedish Church Mission and the Dutch Reformed Church have all shown activity in publication work. There is urgent need for the South Africa Triennial Conference to unify these independent efforts, to deal with orthography and the problem of closely allied dialects, and above all to place literary work on a co-operative basis. In South Central Africa there are presses at Old Umtali and Mount Silinda in Southern Rhodesia, and at Blantyre, Likoma, Blytheswood and two other centres in Nyasaland. The general Missionary Conference of Nyasaland in 1910 suggested the formation of a 'Vernacular Literature Society for Central Africa,' and appealed privately for help from the home base, but hitherto with no visible results.

EAST AFRICA (*from Portuguese East Africa to British East Africa*)

Presses are established at Chamboni and Inhambani (Portuguese East Africa); Magila, Daressalam, Kidugala and Mochi (German East Africa); Mkunazine, Kijabe, Kisauni and Mbale (British East Africa); Kampala and Budo (Uganda).

MADAGASCAR

Three mission presses are established in Antanànarivo, and the missionary societies are working in co-operation. Much literature is already provided.

The existence of fifty-seven mission presses shows that the power of the printed page has been recognized, but there is little in Africa to compare with the great tract and literature societies of other lands. A single society for

Africa could scarcely be effective, and a number of independent societies would clash in their appeals at home. There is a call not so much for large funds as for wise statesmanship in dealing with the whole continent through the missionary societies, for the African is prepared to pay well for his books, and from strategic centres like Johannesburg, Kimberley, and Cairo wide distribution may be cheaply effected.

FOR NON-CHRISTIANS OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

There are reported to be three mission presses in Argentina, one in Paraguay, two in Chili, two in Brazil, one in Venezuela, one at Guatemala, one in Porto Rico, six in Mexico and one in Nain, Labrador—a total of eighteen, but how far some of these are used for missions to Roman Catholics is not stated. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Religious Tract Society, and the South American Missionary Society have some publications for the Indians of South America, most of whom are yet unreached and illiterate. The Indians of North America, including the Eskimo, are provided for by the Religious Tract Society, the American Tract Society, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Moravian mission. The oriental immigrants in the western hemisphere need no literature, except such as can be provided by special organization from their home country. The whole question of literature in Latin America is being studied in preparation for the Panama Conference of Missions in this field, which is to be held in February 1916.

FOR THE JEWS

The London Jews Society reports that it has a press in Jerusalem, and there are other presses employing Hebrew Christians. Quantities of literature have been issued for Jews by the tract societies, publishing houses, and missionary societies. The whole subject, however, of litera-

ture for Jews calls for careful and specialized treatment by a committee with expert knowledge. A list of suitable publications already existing should be compiled, and some policy for development needs to be laid down. Funds will be required, as the plan of selling books to Jews has rarely been attempted, and they are accustomed to free distribution. Nevertheless we must go to the Jew first, and in Christian literature we may find a path of least resistance.

The unoccupied mission fields of the world are not yet ripe for a literature campaign, though they are not altogether unreached by Christian literature. They too must be kept in view in any world survey.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE SITUATION

This sketch of the present situation can scarcely be accurate in every detail, and it may err in its perspective, as it is difficult to estimate the relative values of what has been accomplished. Nevertheless it is sufficient to enable us to indicate lines upon which any possible reconstruction or development may proceed. The reading of a survey of what is being done is apt to leave the impression of great and perhaps sufficient activity. For instance, the statement that there are at least one hundred and eighty mission presses on the foreign field is almost startling. But if only a survey could be made of those things left undone which we ought to have done, the reading of that would dispel all complacency and self-satisfaction. It must be obvious that things cannot be allowed to remain as they are without serious consequences to the progress of the kingdom of God. The missionary societies are spending tens of thousands of pounds every year on education in the mission field. They are turning out multitudes of readers and scholars with a hunger for literature which must be satisfied. But they are providing them with no more than

fragments of pure and healthy food, while the enemy is lavishly supplying abundant reading that is impure and materialistic and godless. Even the native pastors to whom the churches look for Christian leadership are starved in this respect: their libraries are meagre at the best, and often non-existent. No intelligent missionary is satisfied, and least of all are those satisfied who are devoting their whole time and strength to existing literature organizations.

The existing tract and literature societies have great difficulty in maintaining their incomes, and little hope of expanding to meet the ever-growing demands made upon them. The very fact that they are interdenominational, which is their glory, proves a hindrance to handicap them. No church feels definite responsibility for their support, and their claims are overshadowed and often lost in the multitude of denominational appeals. They do not cover the whole mission field. The limitations of their income make it impossible for them to provide adequately even for the countries in which they have been long established. To-day we hear proposals to organize literature societies for areas so far left without help; and as the number of independent societies increases, each with its own appeal and its own organization for raising funds, the struggle for existence will become keener, and the waste of resources will grow worse than at present.

The missionary societies at the home base have not realized their responsibilities in this matter. A few, indeed, are generously lending missionaries and making monetary grants to the literature societies, and thus bearing a burden which all should share. But many missions use the literature provided, and do not seem to feel any sense of indebtedness to those who have to meet the loss involved in its production. We may go further and say that occasionally missions treat the literature societies as rivals in the raising of money, instead of as helpmeets who are providing them with munitions of warfare which they cannot obtain elsewhere.

SUGGESTED OUTLINES OF A POLICY

The whole problem of Christian literature for the mission field needs to be examined afresh, and that from a world standpoint. It is only by viewing the needs of all the separate mission fields in their relation to one another, and to the whole, that the men and money set apart for literary work can be most effectively and economically employed. The requirements of the situation to be kept in view are :

(1) The production of a sufficient variety of literature to meet the needs of all classes in every mission field. Missionaries with special literary gifts ought to have a lengthened period for language study ; and for the time in which they are engaged in writing, sufficient leisure from other duties should be secured to them, and adequate remuneration provided. It is still more important that native scholars should be encouraged to follow literary pursuits by the offer of prizes, scholarships and fellowships for literature.

(2) The publication of literature in cheap and attractive forms. In each great field there is need of an expert in the technicalities of publishing and printing. He might give invaluable help to the mission printing presses, and advise how to improve by consolidation or otherwise the efficiency of such presses as are necessary.

(3) The existence of effective machinery for distribution. There should be religious book shops in every strategic centre, and colporteurs for the scattered populations. Every missionary should regard the distribution of literature as a sacred duty—but some missionaries will require educating and possibly pressure from their home boards before they carry out this plain duty.

These are ideals : if they are to be attained even slowly a much larger sum of money must be devoted to the work than is at present available. In most fields school books and general literature, and in a few fields even Christian literature can be sold at a profit. In the

wider areas, however, especially in the East, literature work can only be carried on adequately at a considerable loss. As the organization for its production and distribution grows and is perfected, and as the Christian Church develops, we may at least anticipate that this loss will be gradually reduced. The supreme need, if there is to be economy, is for unity of purpose and plan.

The line of development does not appear to lie in the multiplication of literature societies to provide for new fields. Nor can existing societies, though they are doing heroic work, cope with the world problem. It seems as though no marked advance can be looked for until the missionary societies themselves regard the production and dissemination of Christian literature, not as the work of outside institutions, but as a part of their own missionary obligation, a duty calling for a definite appropriation from the annual income. Literary work should have its place side by side with educational and medical and philanthropic work on the programme and in the budget of every board. We are learning daily how much we shall gain by co-operation in education and philanthropy—and how much has been lost in the past through lack of it. In Christian literature the only hope of attaining the ideals here sketched lies in close co-operation between all the societies at the home base.

But there is an immediate work to be done on the field. Where there are already literature organizations they must draw together, seeking only the common good, and unify their work as far as possible with a view to the formation ultimately of central organizations. In other fields where no tract or literature societies exist, the missionary conferences should appoint central literature committees. These central committees could work in co-operation with any committees which may be established at the home base. Vigorous action in the mission field would do more than anything else to bring about a forward movement at home.

It cannot be denied that there are difficulties in the way

of co-operation, especially in view of the divergence of theological and ecclesiastical convictions, but a study of the situation makes it clear that there is a wide area of literature which is common ground for all, and co-operation thereon need not be divisive.

In the course of the present year the subject of Christian literature in the mission field will be brought before conferences of the missionary societies in Great Britain and America by the Committee of the Edinburgh Continuation Committee on Christian Literature. If it is found that there is a general willingness to consider plans for dealing more effectively than at present with the production and distribution of Christian literature, that committee will attempt, in consultation with the missionary societies, to formulate definite proposals which can be laid before the boards and societies for their consideration.

JOHN H. RITSON