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Editorial Notes

OF many statements made during the recent Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, the one which would appear to have the most immediate practical significance was uttered by the General Secretary when presenting the B.U. Council Report:—"Before many months have passed we have, I believe, to decide whether we shall seek to raise a new Church Extension Fund or Funds, or whether we shall enlarge the scope of the Home Work Fund."

The movement of population which has left high and dry in the centres of our cities and large industrial towns spacious church buildings—now little more than monuments to their former greatness and popularity—has by the same process brought into being innumerable housing estates and several whole new towns. These constitute obvious and challenging fields of evangelism. Unless the challenge is taken up all denominations are likely to decline. To set up Baptist buildings for worship and witness in these populous areas and provide an adequate ministry there is a task which can be effectively tackled only by the concerted action of the entire denomination. This seems to us to be the paramount need of our time and, ultimately, the most fruitful form of Baptist advance at this present juncture. If the denomination is to be summoned to raise very large sums for Church Extension then, in the first place, pressure must be brought to bear upon central churches whose day is done to sell their premises and sites and contribute the proceeds to the common fund for the sake of expansion in those districts where there is need and opportunity. In the second place, other claimants upon the denomination's pocket must recognise the need to go slow for a period, seeing that our resources are not unlimited. Given these, among other conditions, Baptists can turn decline into increase if they follow promptly, whole-heartedly and generously the lead given by Dr. Payne and set out with determination to claim these new areas for their Lord.

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Under the chairmanship of its President, Mr. Seymour J. Price, the Baptist Historical Society held its Annual Meeting on 27th April in the lounge at Bloomsbury Central Church, London. A report on the unspectacular but valuable work of the Society during the year was presented by the Secretary, who also announced that during the past twelve months the accumulated deficit

had been reduced by the surplus of £63 on the 1952 accounts. Members listened with close attention and great appreciation to a fine address (printed in this issue) on "The Theology of Baptism in Baptist History" by a distinguished Civil Servant and Presbyterian, Mr. J. M. Ross, M.A. Altogether it was a well-attended and successful meeting.

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It is good to know that fellow-Baptists in other lands are increasingly aware of the need to preserve materials relating to denominational history and of encouraging research. Canadian Baptists have been active in this way for some time, while in 1950 the Baptists of New Zealand formed a Historical Society, which now issues a periodical *Bulletin*. Their example has been followed in Australia, and we learn that the South African Baptist Union is also taking steps to gather historical records. Our own Society is in touch with American counterparts both in the South and the North. The cultivation of closer relationships between all these organisations would be of common advantage.

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Meanwhile, to the American Baptist Historical Society we extend our congratulations upon attaining its centenary. Its formation in Philadelphia on 5th May, 1853, was largely due to the enthusiastic advocacy of John Mason Peck. The contrast between his train journey that week from St. Louis through a populated countryside with its numberless churches and the arduous 128-day trek by lumbering wagon across a wild country when, thirty-six years earlier, he had first gone to St. Louis fired in Peck's heart the resolve to do what he could to procure for posterity the recording of the remarkable story of Baptist expansion. The foundation of the American Baptist Historical Society was the immediate result. Its first act was to establish a library which, today housed under the care of Mr. Edward C. Starr at Crozer Seminary, contains many treasures. The second step was to stimulate research, and a great deal of invaluable work has since been done. In 1938 *The Chronicle*, its quarterly journal, made its first appearance and, under the distinguished editorship of Dr. R. E. E. Harkness, continues to flourish. This eminent Society we salute as it enters its second century and we wish for it a continuing success. We share the belief of its founders; "Any people not interested in their past are not likely to be much concerned over their future."

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By the death, on 24th September, 1952, of H. L. Hemmens, the Baptist denomination suffered the loss of one of the most

versatile, devoted and beloved of its sons. On 20th May, 1907, as a young man of twenty-three, he entered the doorway of the old Mission House in Furnival Street, London, for the first time as a member of the home staff of the Baptist Missionary Society. During the ensuing forty-five years the extent and the variety of his services to the Missionary Society, the Baptist Union and kindred causes—and, no less, the character of the man himself—gradually won for him an almost unique place in the life and the affection of the denomination he loved. The story of it all he has modestly told in *Such Has Been My Life*, completed shortly before he died and recently published.¹ All who knew H. L. Hemmens personally and many others to whom his name was familiar will want to read it. They will find that it is not only the well-told narrative of one man's life but, because of the part played by the author in denominational and other developments and also the pen-pictures he provides of notable personalities, a valuable contribution to the history of the Baptists during the past fifty years. Placed in the hands of the young, this story could hardly fail to stir up resolves to labour strenuously for the kingdom of God, in the service of which Harry L. Hemmens spent himself and, in so doing, found freedom and happiness for his own soul and glorified his Master's name on earth.

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The Seventh Day Baptists' *Year-Book* for 1952 (published by the American Sabbath Tract Society at Plainfield, N.J., price \$1.50) gives a detailed account of the General Conference held at Denver, Colorado, last year and includes full reports of the various activities engaged in by the denomination, along with financial statements, statistics and directories of churches and ministers. Strongest in the U.S.A., they have churches in Africa, British Guiana, Jamaica, Holland and New Zealand, while Shanghai, Berlin and London each have one church. Constituted in 1617 the Mill Yard church meets on the premises of our Upper Holloway church. World membership totals 6,460 and there were 104 baptisms last year. The Conference is in membership with the World Council of Churches and "ways and means of presenting the Sabbath truth to the Council" are contemplated.

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"Outstanding Literary and Human Factors of My Life," by the late Dr. Witton Davies will be concluded in our next issue, in which we also expect to include an important article on the Anabaptists by Prof. F. Blanke of Zürich University.

¹ Carey Kingsgate Press, 10s. 6d.