

# Editorial.

## NEW MEMBERS.

The following have joined the Baptist Historical Society since our last issue :

Mr. H. L. Hemmens.

Dr. H. R. Williamson.

Mr. G. W. Terry.

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## OUR ANNUAL MEETING.

The Committee have regretfully come to the conclusion that war conditions again prevent our Society arranging an excursion or public meeting during the Spring Assembly. All B.U. and B.M.S. engagements are to be crowded into three days, Monday to Wednesday, and it is inevitable that College reunions and other functions will clash with official meetings. We have no desire to add to the congestion; but look forward to the time when our excursions, which have proved so popular in recent years, can be resumed.

The Society's present officers and committee are willing to serve for the ensuing year, except that Mr. Farrer desires to retire from the committee, and Mr. C. B. Jewson has accepted an invitation to take his place.

The treasurer's statement for 1940 will be found on another page. The deficit on the year suggests that he will welcome subscriptions for 1941 as early as convenient.

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## KEACH'S HYMN-BOOK AND RIPPON'S TUNE-BOOK.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, in 1691, Benjamin Keach published a book of nearly three hundred hymns called *Spiritual Melody*, and one hundred years later, in 1791, John Rippon published a selection of two hundred *Psalm and Hymn Tunes*. Clearly, had the times been normal, here was the opportunity for an attractive dual celebration; even a Lecture-Recital was a possibility. But it cannot be fitted into the Assembly. We hope, however, to print articles by Dr. Whitley on the Hymn-book in July, and on the Tune-book in October.

Dr. Whitley has made the interesting suggestion that at one or more of the Assembly sessions, hymns from Keach's book should be sung to tunes from Rippon. We would go further,

and suggest that Dr. Whitley should conduct the platform choir of Baptist Union Officers and past-Presidents in rendering the hymns. Nevertheless, we are afraid the joy of witnessing this will not be given to the audience, for it has to be admitted that Keach's hymns have long since ceased to be useful. He was a pioneer in hymnology, but his gift was not comparable with that of Isaac Watts or Charles Wesley. It is possible, for example, that his hymn, "Shine forth, O Lord, upon our souls," was sung at the close of the 1691 P.B. Assembly; but we can hardly imagine our 1941 Assembly giving an inspired rendering of the second verse :

We have had a sore winter's day,  
A pinching time was here;  
Now let such weather flee away  
And springing time draw near.

We look to the Programme Committee to arrange such fare that no delegate will leave the City Temple saying, "A pinching time was here."

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#### THE FORWARD MOVEMENT.

At the time of writing, the comparatively small sum of £15,000 is needed to complete the million pounds for church extension that were to be raised in the ten years terminating at this Assembly. It should, therefore, be fairly certain that the incoming President, Mr. R. Wilson Black, J.P., will have the joy of announcing the completion of the task to which he has given himself with such amazing devotion. It will be said of him as it was said of one of old, "He was worthy, for he loveth our nation and hath built us a synagogue"; but in Mr. Black's case it will be not one but many churches. With a zeal for church extension akin to that of Spurgeon, he has travelled North, South, East and West, laying foundation stones and conducting opening services. After the bustle of recent years he will find the Presidency a rest-cure.

Two other names must be mentioned. Of Mr. O. H. B. Starte, C.B.E., it can surely be said that he came to the kingdom for such a time as this. It is no disrespect to him to say that ten years ago his name, denominationally, was unknown. Now we are all familiar with his initials, and recognise behind them a brother beloved who avoids the limelight and toils unceasingly, no detail being too trivial for his notice.

Our General Secretary, the Rev. M. E. Aubrey, C.H., was the one who had the big vision. When Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem laughed and thought in trivial sums, he spoke of a

million pounds. The sites and bricks and mortar that could be purchased with that sum gripped his imagination; and by pen and speech he has inspired Eliashib and Zaccur and Meremosh, and the inhabitants of Zanoah, such as Association Presidents and Secretaries and Treasurers, aye and the nobles of the denomination who, unlike the ancients, have "put their necks to the work of the Lord." Our secretary has looked beyond bricks and mortar. Within the walls of these new buildings he has visualised the men and women who will be won for Christ, and the strong churches which will be built up; therefore he has not failed to remind the denomination that a true Forward Movement is one concerned with spiritual issues.

There is one outstanding difference in this Fund compared with the Century, Sustentation and Superannuation Funds. Those Funds were represented by cash paid to headquarters, so that the capital monies remained intact under the control of the Baptist Union. At the outset of the Forward Movement probably most anticipated that this Fund would likewise be paid to headquarters and be allocated from there. It took time to realise that a comparatively small sum only would be paid to the central fund, and that practically all the monies would be retained and disbursed locally. The scheme was very complex, and the commissioners have had difficult issues to face in deciding what were "new monies," and whether all rebuilding and alteration schemes were genuine cases of "church extension." However, even though borderline amounts and projects have been included, the effort has been a truly magnificent one. No previous decade has seen such widespread chapel building, and the results for good will be far-reaching.

A great opportunity for statesmanship now faces the denomination. The pre-war distribution of population has probably gone for good, and sites are needed in the new districts which will house the future townships. Moreover, enemy action has destroyed many church buildings and seriously damaged others. Quite unwittingly, and certainly against his inclinations, Hitler has partly solved the problem of redundant churches, for it is unthinkable that money will be squandered in rebuilding downtown churches to serve a population that is not there. Some means must be found of preventing a thorough-going isolationism, supported by antique trust deeds, from crippling the churches of the future.