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No. 461.

THE  
MISSIONARY'S FATHER.

A LETTER FROM REV. WILLIAM GOODELL.

CONSTANTINOPLE, August 18, 1843.

MY DEAR BROTHER—The intelligence contained in your letter was not unexpected. Our father had attained to a great age, lacking only five days of being eighty-six years old. He was full of days, but more full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. How long he had "borne the image of the earthly" before he was renewed in the spirit of his mind, I know not; but I know he had long borne "the image of the heavenly."

Though I can look back some forty-five years or more, I cannot look back to the year when he was not living a life of faith, and prayer, and self-denial—of deadness to the world, and of close walk with God. This was the more remarkable, as in the church, of which in those days he was a member, there was scarcely one individual who could fully sympathize with him in his religious views. Those great evangelical doctrines of the Gospel, which his own minister never preached, and his own church never adopted into her creed, were his meat and drink. "*The raven, though an unclean bird, brought food to Elijah,*" was a common expression of his on returning from church, where he had been able to pick out of much chaff a few crumbs of the bread of life. His privileges were few; prayer-meetings were unknown; the sum total, or about the sum total of his library, was the family Bible, one copy of Watts' Psalms and Hymns, Doddridge's Rise and Progress, Pike's Cases of Conscience, the second volume of Fox's Book of Martyrs, and the Assembly's Catechism.

But though his means of grace were thus limited, yet, meditating day and night on God's law, his roots struck deep; and he was like a tree planted by the rivers of water, whose leaf is always green, and whose fruit is always abundant. Whoever saw him riding on horseback would, if he kept himself concealed, be almost sure to see him engaged



in prayer. Whoever should work with him in seed-time or harvest, would find his thoughts as actively employed above, as his hands were below. Whoever of the Lord's people met him, by day or by night, at home or abroad, alone or in company, would find him ready to sit down with them in heavenly places, in order to comprehend "what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height" of the love of Christ.

Being the youngest of the family, you can have but an indistinct recollection of the small house on the side of the hill, containing two small rooms and a garret, floored with loose and rough boards, where twelve of us were born; and of the small clump of apple-trees before the door, where your elder brothers and sisters played in the days of their thoughtless childhood. There, with no lock to any door, and no key to any trunk, or drawer, or cupboard; there, where, as I am told, nothing now remains but an old cellar, which may even itself, long before this, have been filled up; there our godly father prayed for us with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; there, on every Sabbath-eve, he asked us those solemn, important, and all-comprehensive questions from the Catechism; and there, with eyes and heart raised to heaven, we used to sing to the tune of old Rochester,

"God, my supporter and my hope,  
My help for ever near;  
Thine arm of mercy held me up,  
When sinking in despair."

And there, too, our mother, of precious memory, though, as she died when you were but six months old, you remember her not—there she lived a life of poverty, patience, meekness, and faith. There she used to sit and card her wool by the light of the pine knot, and sing to us those sweet words,

"Hov'ring among the leaves, there stands  
The sweet celestial Dove;  
And Jesus on the branches hangs  
The banner of his love."

And there, too, almost thirty-four years ago, we assembled early one morning in her little bed-room to see her die. Her peace was like a river; she was full of triumph; and she was able to address to us words of heavenly consolation till



she had actually crossed over into shallow water within one minute of the opposite banks of the Jordan—*heaven and all its glories full in view*. Precious woman, “*Were my children but pious,*” thou didst often say in thy last long sickness, “*how cheerfully could I leave them, and go away.*” But what thine eyes were not permitted to behold, have not the angels long since told thee—that the eight children thou didst leave behind, with all, or all but one of their partners, were partakers of that blessed Gospel “which was all thy salvation, and all thy desire;” and that three of thy sons were engaged in proclaiming it to others? Yes, God hath heard thy prayers, and “hath remembered his holy covenant,” as we are all witnesses this day.

But before I close, I must say something more of the early habits and character of our venerable father. The little farm he once possessed, if it were not all *ploughed* over, was, I am confident, almost every foot of it *prayed* over. And some dried apples from it, which a subsequent owner sent me a few years since, were to me “as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.” He was full of the millennium and of the missionary spirit, long before the existence of the present missionary societies; praying daily for both Jews and Gentiles—saying with the Psalmist, “Let the people praise thee, O God; let the people praise thee, all of them”—and like his uncle Solomon Goodell, was ready and desirous to contribute something for the spread of the glorious Gospel long before he had an opportunity for so doing.

He served three years in the revolutionary war; and I was struck with the fact you communicated of its being early on the morning of the memorable 4th of July, amidst the roaring of cannon, that he slept in peace. And though to his children he left no inheritance, no, not so much as one cent, yet, in his godly example and prayers, he has left them the very richest legacy which any father ever bequeathed his children.

It is a rare privilege we have all enjoyed in being descended from such parents. They were the children of the great King. They belonged to the royal family. Their names were on the catalogue of princes, and of those that live for ever. They daily walked abroad with the conscious dignity of heirs to a great estate, even an incorruptible in-



heritance. And they have now gone to sit down with Christ on his throne. "And they shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more." I love to look back and see how, with no ambitious aspirings after worldly gain, or pleasure, or honor, they humbly walked with God; how from day to day they deliberately sought, both for themselves and for their children, first of all, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" and how in this scoffing world they were so united to Christ as apparently to have no separate interest or existence—it not being so much "they that lived, as Christ living in them."

It was doubtless a mercy to them, that they never at any time possessed much of this world's goods, and were at times reduced to great straits; and a mercy to us, that we had to bear the yoke in our youth, and often to make our meal of salt and potatoes; and I have often found it in my heart to bless God for all his dealings with them and with us. And why should we be anxious to leave our children any other inheritance than was left to us? If we leave them this, and they avail themselves of it, then, though *we* be dead, they shall still have a Father who will provide for them, and take care of them, and bless them, and make them happy for ever.

And is our father gone, who prayed for us so much? Let us be thankful that the great Intercessor "*ever* liveth to make intercession for us;" and more than ever, let us avail ourselves of his mediation and atonement, of his grace and strength, and of his righteousness and Spirit; and more than ever, let us now pray for ourselves and for all our brothers and sisters. And is our father dead? Let us arise and give thanks to God, that good men *may* die. Let us give *special* thanks that our father and mother are no longer in this world of sin and sorrow. And let us be more careful than ever to "be followers of those who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises," being sinners saved by grace alone.

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