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DR. R. ANDERSON'S

FAREWELL TO THE MISSIONARIES.

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1866.

FAREWELL LETTER.



MISSIONARY HOUSE, Boston,
July 5, 1866.

DEAR BRETHREN :

On the 3d of February last, I addressed a letter to my brethren in the missions, stating my near approach to the age of three-score-and-ten, and my consequent purpose to decline a reëlection as Corresponding Secretary, at the next annual meeting of the Board. At the same time I introduced to you the Rev. Dr. N. G. Clark, my colleague and intended successor in the department of Foreign Correspondence. I also intimated the hope that I should have the privilege, near the close of the year, of sending a few farewell words to my missionary brethren.

My connection with the missions began in the spring of 1822—forty-four years ago. I then, in the absence of Mr. Evarts, took charge of the correspondence, and the editing of the "Missionary Herald," for six months of my senior year at Andover. My permanent connection with the Board commenced in the autumn of that year, at first simply

as assistant to the Corresponding Secretary, and then as Assistant Secretary until 1832, when three coördinate Corresponding Secretaries were appointed by the Board, and the department of Foreign Correspondence was devolved on me. In fact, my official duties had from the first been chiefly in that department. For thirty-four years, therefore, I have had the full charge of the correspondence with the missions beyond sea.

The brethren and sisters now in the field all went forth during my connection with the Board, excepting father and mother Spaulding in Ceylon, father and mother Thurston at the Sandwich Islands, and fathers Kingsbury and Byington among the Choc-taws. The whole number, male and female, exceeds twelve hundred, of whom more than eight hundred went to the missions beyond the seas. Of these, how many have now gone from earth; and of how many may it be truly said, that their "praise is in all the churches." Glorious is their record on high, and most pleasant is the thought of again meeting them.

While thinking of them, and of their surviving associates, it is natural to think, also, of what God has been pleased to do chiefly through their labors. By no means would I undervalue our missions as they were forty-four years ago. They then seemed to me, as they now do, a noble enterprise, and the missionaries of that early day have never as a body been surpassed. But the missions were then all in their infancy, and there were only six of them, with only sixteen stations. There are now twenty missions, some of them very extended, with one hundred stations,

and two hundred and forty out-stations. The number of native preachers and catechists was then very small, and those were chiefly in Ceylon; nor was there then, nor for a long time afterwards, a native pastor in any one of our missions. Now, the number of licensed preachers and catechists is two hundred and forty-eight, and there are more than sixty native pastors. We had then twenty-one ordained missionaries in the field; four hundred and fifteen have since gone forth. Scarcely less than two hundred churches have been formed, which have received more than sixty thousand hopeful converts, — about two thirds of whom are supposed to be no longer among the living. The printing by our mission presses exceeds a thousand millions of pages, which have been scattered abroad in forty-two languages of the unevangelized world.

All this, as you well know, is only one item in the extended system of foreign missionary operations. The progress of our Board has but kept pace with that of the four great English missionary societies, which began their career before us. And there are not less than two-score missionary societies of subsequent origin, in different countries of the Christian world, some of which are quite vigorous. And how has the Lord singularly prepared the way for his people to make known his Gospel through the earth! Nearly the whole of Turkey, the Nestorians, India, Burmah, China, and portions of Japan — all closed, or nearly so, against the missionary forty-four years ago — have become accessible; and it is matter for grateful surprise and joy, that so many of the

grand strategic points of the unevangelized world are occupied, at this moment, by Protestant missions.

Recalling to mind my contemporaries and associates that have rested from their labors, whom shall I name, since I cannot name them all, and so many of them deserve to be held in everlasting remembrance! Dr. Samuel Worcester, our first Corresponding Secretary, died the year before I came to Boston; but I had known him from my early youth as the bosom friend of my honored father; and I loved him, after my father died until his own decease, more than I loved any other living man. It was preëminently he who laid so well the foundations of our missionary enterprise. With his worthy coadjutor and successor, Jeremiah Evarts, I was associated eight years. Mr. Evarts's memory of dates and facts was very remarkable, but scarcely exceeded the strength of his judgment, and his mental self-control. These two men are the most brilliant stars in our constellation. Next to them stands Samuel Hubbard, a judge of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, twenty-two years an active member of the Prudential Committee, and a most admirable Christian man. Of Presidents, I might speak of Governor John Cotton Smith, — an inimitable presiding officer, — and of the greatly beloved Theodore Frelinghuysen. Then there were Stephen Van Rensselaer — the Albany Patroon, of singular simplicity of manners — and Chief Justice Thomas S. Williams, both Vice-Presidents of the Board, and held in the highest estimation. I might mention the Hon. William Reed, Dr. Leonard Woods, Governor

Samuel T. Armstrong, and also younger men, all valued members of our Prudential Committee, but released from the cares of earth—some of them many years ago. Nor must I fail to speak of other associates in the correspondence. The Rev. David Greene, my fellow-laborer for a score of years, was an able and faithful servant of the Lord Jesus. Dr. Benjamin B. Wisner, for several years our Home Secretary, was eminently endowed for the duties of that office, but died in the prime and beauty of his age. So did the eloquent and beloved Dr. Elias Cornelius, elected Secretary of the Board, but not allowed time to place so much as his foot upon the official threshold. And so also did Dr. William J. Armstrong, Home Secretary for twelve years, whose active and ardent career was suddenly closed in the wreck of the steamer *Atlantic*.

In a review of the past, gratitude is perhaps my predominant feeling. To have been intrusted with such a correspondence, and for so long a time, and with agreeable and excellent fellow-laborers and companions; to have had so few misunderstandings with my brethren at home and abroad, and so much mutual confidence and love; to have been allowed to visit so many of the missions, most of them once, and several more than once; and now to be permitted to retire from my office assured that I have the confidence and affection of my brethren and sisters in the field;—this, when I think how undeserving I am of such blessings from the hand of God, is almost overpowering; and I cannot but admire the sovereign goodness of Him who has been pleased to extend such mercy toward me.

I know the reality of my love for my brethren and sisters in the missions; and I am sure that no other associated body of Christian men and women is more worthy of esteem and love. In common with my associates, I deeply sympathize with the missions in their diminished numbers, as a consequence of our late civil war, and in the increasing weight of their cares and labors; and the more, as I do not see an immediate prospect of relief. We share in your trials, and can almost say, with the holy Apostle, "that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you." Sure I am, that for many years I have rejoiced in your joys and sorrowed in your sorrows, though multiplied cares have often prevented my giving you this assurance.

I must not omit to speak of your children returned to this country. One of my earliest essays in argumentative letters to Missions, was on this subject, to the brethren in Ceylon. Whether I was right in my positions, or wrong, I then became deeply interested in the difficult questions relating to missionary children, and have been so ever since. In my private memorandum-book for the Returned Children, with a page devoted to each, I have now four hundred and eighty-two names. My information is yet incomplete; but if life and health be spared for a couple of years, I hope to have an ample basis of facts for some very interesting practical conclusions.

I am humbled when I reflect upon the many shortcomings in my official life; but I trust the Master, in his long-suffering mercy, has forgiven me, and I thank you for your forbearance and indulgent kindness.

The office of Secretary, whether in the Foreign or Home Department, is loaded down with responsibilities, labors, perplexities, and cares, not to be sustained save through the grace of God. The Secretary, not less than his missionary brethren, needs the presence of his divine Lord; and that presence, in the fulfillment of the Great Promise, I believe both you and I have enjoyed. I certainly have been conscious of it in not a few of my official perplexities and sorrows, in many an ocean voyage, and in many a foreign land.

I have never had stronger assurance of the value and of the ultimate triumph of the missionary cause, than I have now. Never indeed was my confidence so strong as at present. For, I am now looking back as one putting off his armor, and can do it with something like the calmness of a spectator, yet with the feelings of one who has been long in the conflict, and sometimes in the thickest of the fight. What at the time seemed to me like shouts of victory, I now know to have been such, and that ours is a triumphing army. I see, too, great progress in our knowledge of the enemy's strength, of the disposition of his forces, and of the ground for which we are contending; and also in the materials for our holy warfare, in the experience and discipline of our forces, in skill and confidence on the battle-field, and in the conviction "that they that be with us, are more than they that be with them." I have seen the wonder-working providence of God opening nearly the whole of the heathen world to the Gospel; the Word of God translated into languages spoken

by far the largest portion of the unevangelized nations; and many a benighted region lighted up with gospel missions, much as the promenades and parks of our great cities are lighted up at night. Though night is not thereby converted into day, the wayfarer finds his path illuminated, and goes on his way rejoicing. Thus it is in large portions of Western Asia, Africa, and India, in several of the maritime districts of China, and in many a group of islands in the Pacific Ocean.

I by no means believe that we have learned all that experience can teach respecting economy in the working of foreign missions; but I am confident that there has been great progress in that direction under the divine guidance. How much more entire is our reliance, now, on those agencies which are strictly spiritual; how much higher the estimate we put upon a native ministry; and how vast the consequent reduction in our estimate of the cost of the world's conversion. I can only allude to this subject. The churches, the missions, and we too, have been slow of apprehension in these matters; but who can fail to see that the missionary work has been gradually approaching the simplicity of the apostolic missions, which knew nothing, among the heathen, "save Jesus Christ and him crucified?" Yet I feel assured, that the tone and substance of our preaching have been the same from the beginning. We have preached the same Gospel with the Apostle Paul. We have proclaimed salvation through the blood of the Lamb.

The long and pleasant correspondence between us,

beloved brethren and sisters, will soon close for the present life. But I joyfully anticipate that we shall be co-workers beyond the grave, in the everlasting kingdom of the Messiah, which must needs afford eternal scope for all our powers. Next to the anticipated joy of meeting the Saviour, is that of meeting the thousands of converts, and of once more saluting our co-workers in the missions, who have finished their course on earth. What will be the joy in associating with them and with the dearly beloved brethren and sisters now in the field, as fellow-laborers anywhere in the wide regions of heavenly bliss! Heaven, in my apprehension of it, is the loyal and holy kingdom of our divine Lord.

I have had much satisfaction, during past months, in gradually transferring my responsibilities, as your official correspondent, to my esteemed and valued colleague, Dr. Clark. I doubt not you will find him an efficient and satisfactory helper in your great work. At the age of forty, his judgment is of course matured; and being thirty years my junior, he will be better able, than I now am, to give attention to the multifarious details in our department of the business. I may be near at hand a while longer, should life and health be spared, to give him aid when needed. I feel assured of his ability and disposition to serve you, and bespeak for him your confidence and affection. He will have the able coöperation of his respected associates,—including of course the Prudential Committee, a body of men distinguished for their soundness of judgment and their fidelity in attendance on their weekly meetings.

Though retiring from present official responsibilities, I by no means expect to be less really devoted to the missionary work than I have been. How far I shall be able to carry out my present plans, is known only to God. But I trust He will enable me to give a somewhat extended and correct practical exhibit of the missionary enterprise, in a series of lectures I have been requested to prepare and deliver in one of our oldest theological seminaries. The other work I have had in mind may perhaps require more vigor and discrimination than I shall have at command; but I am favored as to health, and for some years have had an earnest desire to prepare a volume on the instructive, and in some respects remarkable, experiences of the Board and its missions, during the time I have occupied the post so advantageous for observation.

Finally, brethren and sisters, farewell. "Be perfect; be of good comfort; be of one mind; live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you;" "and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Give my love and best wishes to the native brethren who remember me. May all of them have grace to be faithful unto death. Again, I say farewell; but with the cheerful expectation of meeting you where God shall wipe all tears from our eyes, and fill us with the joy of a perfect salvation, through the atonement and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

My dear wife, who for almost forty years has

shared with me the pleasure of welcoming you to our house, and of meeting you at our missionary gatherings elsewhere, and who has ever cherished the tenderest interest in your welfare, unites with me in these salutations; and I am, as ever, your affectionate brother and co-laborer in the Gospel.

R. ANDERSON,

Foreign Secretary of the Board.

P. S. It will of course be in order for you, if so disposed, to address me in my official capacity, up to the time of the Board's annual meeting. As an old and interested friend, I shall ever be pleased to hear from you; and there may be points to be illustrated in our history, on which I shall need, and shall presume to ask, your kind assistance.



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