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INTRODUCTION.

Importance of Missionary Biography
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THE chief end of Biography is to embalm virtue and perpetuate usefulness. It is proper indeed that there should sometimes be an enduring record of the lives of bad men; for the world needs warnings as well as examples; but no doubt, in ordinary cases, it is safest and best to let the memory of the wicked perish. But where an individual has lived a life of eminent virtue and honourable usefulness, where his career has been marked by great self-denial and unwearied effort for the benefit of his fellow-creatures, and he has been hailed, while living, as a great public benefactor, it is peculiarly fitting that the memory of such a man should not be suffered quickly to pass away; and Biography performs an office due alike to the living and the dead, in protracting his earthly existence after death has done all that it can do to terminate it. It is true, indeed, that a good man is represented on earth, after his departure, by a thousand nameless influences, even though his very name may be forgotten; but he survives in a still higher and more palpable sense, where gratitude and reverence unite with truth in tracing his course and delineating his character. It is by means of Biography especially, that we live among the people of by-gone ages; that we gather around us the great and good of other countries and other states of society; that we open our minds and hearts to the dictates of wisdom from voices that have long since been hushed in death; in a word, that we make the past subservient to the present, and receive into our own bosoms, the seeds of virtue and happiness from hands that had mouldered long before we had a being.

While the biography of all who have been distinguished for intellectual and moral worth and for a high degree of Christian usefulness, is worthy to be read and studied as a source of enduring profit—if I mistake not, there

is on some accounts, a peculiar importance attached to the memoirs of those who have lived and died missionaries of the cross. The peculiar relations which they have sustained both to the church and to the world, the prominence which they have enjoyed, and the interest which they have awakened during their lives, together with the debt of gratitude which the church recognises as due to their memories, all conspire to invest, at least to the eye of the Christian, the faithful record of what they have been and what they have done, with more than ordinary attractions. As I have been asked to write a few pages introductory to a work designed to commemorate some of the greater lights, now extinguished by death, in the missionary field, I know not how I can comply with the request to better purpose, than by offering a few thoughts on the subject that most obviously presents itself, namely, **MISSIONARY BIOGRAPHY**. What then are some of the considerations which especially commend to our regard, this department of our Christian literature?

IT OPENS SOURCES OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE.

One of the most gratifying as well as useful kinds of knowledge, is that of the manners, the usages, the institutions, that prevail in other countries. We are curious to know how the descendants of the same progenitor, the heirs of the same nature with ourselves, but who are separated from us by perhaps many thousand miles, and possibly have their home on the opposite side of the globe—we are curious to know how they live—how far their views and tastes and habits differ from our own—what influences have moulded their characters, and what counter influences are needed for their improvement and elevation. The deep-seated and general desire for this species of knowledge, is the reason why books of travels in foreign countries are generally read with so much avidity; and though there may be good cause for suspecting that many of their statements are apocryphal—even this scarcely diminishes the number of eager and delighted readers. Now we should naturally expect that the most authentic and satisfactory accounts, especially of the Pagan and barbarous nations, would be furnished by missionaries; partly because their high characters are a full voucher for the fidelity of their statements, and partly because their observations are the result not of a transient sojourn, but of a permanent residence among the people. Accordingly we find, as a matter of fact, that for a large part

of all that we know concerning not only the moral and civil condition, but even the Geography and Natural History of most of the Eastern nations, we are indebted immediately to those excellent men who have taken up their abode among them in the character of missionaries. There is scarcely a department of human knowledge to which these benefactors of their race have not contributed; and many an elaborate volume, as well as many a museum of natural science, testifies that while they have been diligently engaged in their appropriate work, they have not been indifferent to other subjects connected with the general improvement of society.

Now, in reading the lives of those who have thus had their field of labour in distant countries, and not unfrequently among strange and barbarous people, we seem almost to become the witnesses,—even the sharers of their labours, to see what they see and hear what they hear; and we hereby gain a much more vivid impression of the actual condition of the people among whom they have dwelt, than we could receive through any other medium. Various little incidents are constantly coming out, which, while they give distinctness and life and individuality to the narrative, form the best illustration of personal qualities and social habits. This remark applies perhaps with greater force to the journals of our missionaries, than to the formal biographies of them which are written by other hands; nevertheless, such biographies, if they are skilfully constructed, are always a channel of much important general information. And while they gratify our curiosity on some points, they awaken it on others, and thus at once reward and cherish the spirit of useful research.

It seems to be generally supposed that this kind of reading is designed, if not exclusively, yet chiefly, for the benefit of the church; but the truth is, it is by no means either unworthy of, or unfitting to, a philosopher; for it supplies materials which philosophy may turn to the best account in settling many great questions pertaining to human life and destiny. In order to form the most enlarged and accurate judgment of the principles of human nature we must contemplate man, so far as we can, in connection with all the multiform circumstances in which he is ever placed; and we must note the developments of the common humanity under all these varied influences; and then, in the true spirit of induction, we must found our principles, or rear our systems, on the substantial basis of facts. If Philosophy deals honestly with the facts thus accumulated, she will be obliged to acknowledge

that the result is in full accordance with the teachings of God's word; and that she has really, while pursuing her own independent inquiries been acting as an humble auxiliary to Christianity.

The study of missionary biography is further recommended by the consideration that

IT IS A MEANS OF CHRISTIAN GROWTH.

As man's nature is essentially social, so it is especially in the exercise of his social qualities, that his character is formed either for good or evil. The bad man makes himself worse by associating with those whose habits and tempers are kindred to his own; and the good man becomes better through the influence of other good men, whose example he is permitted, either directly or indirectly, to contemplate. Let a man of acknowledged Christian character be separated from all Christian society, and cut off even from the opportunity of contemplating the lives of the faithful, except as they come up before him occasionally in vague recollection, and it will be strange indeed if the vigour of his good affections does not quickly abate,—if he does not begin to feel and to show that something has occurred to interfere sadly with the actings of the divine life. But let this same individual be constantly kept in the bosom of Christian society; let him be habitually within the range of religious privileges and the atmosphere of social devotion; let him be within reach of the word of faithful rebuke if he goes astray, or of cheering encouragement if he begins to despond; let him see the excellence of the gospel continually mirrored forth in the exemplary lives of those who walk most closely with God;—and there is good reason to expect that his own course will be as the shining light, growing brighter unto the perfect day. The qualities which he contemplates in others with an approving and admiring eye, impart new vigour to the same qualities already existing in his own character; the words of truth and grace which he hears from others are lodged as seeds of holiness in his own soul; the self-denying duties which he sees others perform, grow easier to himself—from the encouragement which their example inspires; and his progress towards Heaven is greatly quickened, and his evidence of a title to Heaven proportionably brightened, from his being surrounded by those who are animated by a kindred spirit and a like glorious hope.

Now what is true of example as visibly and palpably exhibited in a

Christian's daily walk, is true of it at least in a degree, when it comes to us enshrined in faithful biography. If the latter is somewhat less impressive than the former, still, by being always within our reach, we may contemplate it at our pleasure; we may study it in the house and by the way; and if our impressions of it become faint, we have always at hand the means of reviving them. And the more elevated the character which engages our thoughts, whether through the record or in actual life,—admitting that we open our minds and hearts to its legitimate influence,—the higher is our advantage for increasing in knowledge, purity and joy.

It will hardly be questioned by any person of common candour that the great mass of Protestant missionaries in modern times have been persons of more than common attainments in the Christian life. There is one consideration that would seem to settle this point beyond doubt—it is, that in making up their minds to become missionaries, they give the highest possible evidence of their sincerity and earnest devotion to the cause of Christ. They voluntarily consent to resign all the advantages of Christian, perhaps, of civilized society, and to break away from their dearest earthly friends, and to spend their lives, perhaps beneath the rays of a vertical sun,—perhaps amidst the most disgusting and horrid rites of Pagan idolatry,—perhaps among barbarians who would not scruple even to take the lives of those who would be their benefactors—and for what? Why, to enlighten and renovate and save the souls of men; to obey the ascending Saviour's command to preach the gospel to every creature. It must be acknowledged that a spirit of self-righteousness, or of mock heroism, may work itself up to an astonishing pitch of self-denial, and for aught we can say, may even court not only a missionary's, but a martyr's sacrifices; but still it remains true that he who spends his life and makes his grave, as a missionary among the heathen, gives the highest evidence that we can ordinarily look for, not only of sincerity, but of an exalted type of Christian character. And what would seem to be implied in the very fact of voluntary consecration to the missionary work, is only what we see more fully evidenced to us in the subsequent lives of those who are thus devoted. By the manner in which they endure trials, resist temptations, overcome obstacles, and hold on their hard and humble, yet glorious way, they show that they never lose sight of eternal objects and interests, and never wander far away from the fountain of grace and strength. In reading the biography of such men, therefore, we put our

selves into communion with men of might and men of mark; and as we contemplate their extraordinary purity and energy and zeal, we may hope to be changed more and more into their image, which is but a reproduction, —faint and feeble indeed,—of the image of the Master.

It belongs also to this species of biography that it illustrates in an eminent degree the power of divine truth. The conversion of a sinner is substantially the same thing under every variety of circumstances: it is a change in the current of the soul's desires and affections; it is the displacing of the world and the substitution of God, as an object of supreme regard and ultimate pursuit; it is, in a word, becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus. The same almighty energy is necessary to accomplish this change in the mere decent moralist, or the mere speculative believer, as in the degraded votary of superstition, immorality or infidelity. Nevertheless our idea of the power of the gospel is necessarily heightened by the visible measure of degradation from which its subject has been raised; and hence our conceptions of it never rise higher than when we view it in its actings upon the ignorance and pollutions of Paganism. Now those who are gathered as the fruits of missionary labour are generally of the class whose conversion most strikingly illustrates the power and grace of God; and in reading the memoirs of the missionaries, we have constantly presented before us, in the progress of their labours, evidence of the quickening influence of God's word, that comes with the force of complete demonstration. And as the Christian has the wonderful works of God thus passing before him—as he witnesses the conquests which the gospel accomplishes even in the strongholds of the Prince of darkness—this gospel becomes more and more the object of his devout veneration; he is grateful for the faith which he has in it, and humble that his faith is not stronger; he presses it to his heart with a still deeper conviction that it is a thing of life and power; and he breathes forth a yet more earnest prayer to Heaven that, under its transforming influence, he may become a nobler and more perfect specimen of God's renovating workmanship. Who can read the history of the life of Swartz, or Henry Martyn, or John Williams, or of almost any of our modern missionaries, and note the signal triumphs of truth and grace which are here exhibited, without being quickened to a higher sense of the value of the gospel, or without resolving on an increased degree of conformity to its precepts, and aspiring to a deeper sympathy with its spirit.

There is yet another aspect in which we may consider the biographies of the missionaries as adapted to invigorate the principle of spiritual life,—I refer to the many signal instances of the merciful interposition of Providence which they record. These men and women, in devoting themselves to the missionary work, made up their minds to a life of difficulty and peril. They knew that they were going among people who had scarcely any sympathies in common with themselves; that they would be looked upon with an eye of cold suspicion, as being innovators upon the religious systems which had been in vogue for ages; and they could not be certain that even their lives would not become the prey of Pagan barbarity. And though their general previous apprehensions may have been fully realized, and though they may have had to encounter many difficulties which had never entered into their calculations, yet have they been the objects, in a marked degree, of God's providential care and goodness. Obstacles which at first seemed insurmountable have been most unexpectedly and marvellously removed. Dangers which appeared inevitable and appalling have been averted by some instrumentality so marked as well nigh to bear the aspect of a miracle. Doubts in regard to the course of duty which have weighed heavily and for a long time upon the spirit, have, at length, by some sudden turn of circumstances been dissipated in an hour. Bright prospects have been suddenly overcast; sanguine hopes of good have been overtaken with disappointment, the most useful lives have been, as human wisdom would say, prematurely terminated; and yet subsequent events have shown that in all these apparently adverse dispensations, an unseen hand has been not only sustaining, but advancing the missionary cause. Those whose memories reach back to the earliest period of American foreign missions, will readily call to mind the deep lamentation that was heard among the churches, on occasion of the death of Harriet Newell; and yet it has long since ceased to be a matter of doubt that that devoted woman accomplished more by her early death than she would have done by a long life of missionary labour. She was the first American lady who set an example of going among the heathen to die; and there is that in her very name which, to this day, quickens the pulsations of the heart of Christian benevolence all over the world. Her grave was no sooner made than it sent forth a voice of tender expostulation in behalf of the poor Heathen; and that voice has not yet died away, even after the lapse of nearly forty years.

It is a trite remark that those who will notice providences will never want providences to notice. The missionaries, not only from the earnest character of their piety, but from the trying circumstances in which they are placed, are always looking out for the divine interpositions: they recognise the divine hand in events in which others would not look beyond the common course of nature; and what they thus notice and record, ultimately becomes a part of the history of their lives. Hence we find that the recognition of Providence in every thing,—in the evil as well as the good,—in the clouds as well as the sunshine,—together with the connecting of events with each other in vindication of the divine goodness, forms a striking characteristic of the memoirs of almost all our missionaries. And the spirit which their publications breathe, is the very spirit in which the mass of Christians are more lacking than almost any other. While they profess to acknowledge God's providence, yet in their thoughts and feelings and works, they too often deny it. These publications then meet an important exigency in the experience of most Christians. They are fitted to make them think more of God in the ordinary concerns of life; to suppress the spirit of discontent and disquietude under the divine allotments; and to render the idea of the divine presence at once a security against temptation, an aid in the discharge of duty, and a support under the burden of calamity.

The conclusion on this subject to which we should arrive from a view of the circumstances of the case, is, if I mistake not, fully confirmed by results, so far as they have already been obtained. If we look for the brightest forms of Christian character, for the most enlarged spirit of benevolence, the most active and self-denying zeal in the ordinary walks of Christian life, our eye will unquestionably rest upon those who have the deepest interest in the cause of missions;—those who are most familiar with the labours and trials of our departed missionaries, as presented by themselves and their biographers. And it is no doubt in no inconsiderable degree, by the contemplation and study of these interesting records, that these earnest Christians, who constitute the strength and glory of the church, have attained to their high measure of spirituality. Let the lives of our missionaries then be studied as a means of brightening the Christian graces, and growing in Christian usefulness. But there is yet another reason for studying them: it is that they are fitted to act as

A STIMULUS TO MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE.

They appeal to our sympathy in aid of the cause of missions by the *sufferings* which they record. Though we rarely find our missionaries giving way to a spirit of complaint or despondency, but on the other hand, often see in them the finest examples of Christian heroism, yet their history, after all, is little more than a history of successive trials and conflicts; and the account which that illustrious missionary, Paul, gave of *his* perils and cares and sufferings, might, in its general features at least, be considered as a tolerably faithful record of many a modern missionary's experience. Even those whose lot is the least difficult, are exiled from most of the blessings which we think of first in estimating our own happy condition; and withal are subjected to many positive hardships and sacrifices, of which we have at best a very inadequate conception. But there are many whose lot is distinguished for severity even amidst sufferers; who, while their temporal wants are but sparingly supplied, are exposed to become the victims of Pagan suspicion—perhaps of cannibal barbarity. There are a large number of females connected with the various missions;—females, too, who, in their earlier days, have known the comforts of a quiet and respectable home, and have been brought up in the bosom of competence, if not of affluence. What a change must it be for *them*, to reflect that their once happy home is in another land, and that nothing meets their eye but what tells of the degradation, the pollution, the cruelty, of Paganism! We receive intelligence of the trials of our missionaries from time to time, through the medium of their journals and other communications; and after their Master has called them home, the story of their sacrifices and sufferings is perhaps put forth in a more enduring form, that thus they may continue to make their appeal to the churches after they are dead.

Now what is the effect which these sad details which form so large a part of the memoirs of our departed missionaries are fitted to produce on those who love the missionary cause? The first effect will be to quicken the spirit of Christian sympathy. Those who have departed have indeed done with suffering, and have entered into rest; but others remain labouring in the same field, bearing the same burdens, exposed to the same perils; and why should not our sympathy for them be as active as it ought to have been for those who are now no longer subjects of it? If it belongs to the

Christian spirit to exercise a fellow-feeling towards all who are in distress, is it not especially obligatory upon us to extend our sympathy to those who are doing a work of common interest to them and to us—a work in which they have benevolently volunteered to become the immediate agents? And if our sympathy be awakened in their behalf, it will lead us to pray for them with greater constancy and fervour: when our hearts melt within us in view of what we know of their sufferings and trials, we shall plead more earnestly with the Father of all mercies to be a wall of fire round about them, to impart to them richly of the supports of his grace; and to give them, in the increased success of their labours, fresh tokens of his approbation. And if our sympathy prompts us to pray for them in sincerity, it will prompt us no less to act in accordance with our prayers; in other words, to contribute according to our ability, of our substance, to soften the severity of their lot, and increase their means of usefulness. The trials of the dead plead with us in behalf of the living: let us do something to sustain and comfort them, before the record of what *they* have suffered, shall address itself to Christians of another generation.

But while the memoirs of these heroic men and women appeal to our sympathies by the sufferings which they record, not less do they encourage our hopes by the manifold evidences of success which they furnish. The absolute promise of God, that the nations shall ere long all be subdued to the gracious reign of the Mediator, ought to be enough to keep up the Christian's courage in the darkest hour, and to induce him to labour perseveringly in the face of the most appalling obstacles. But sad experience shows that the faith of most Christians is apt to flag, unless it is sustained by some visible tokens of the divine favour; and in the great work of converting the world especially, we naturally look to see whether the measure of success bestowed is proportioned to the degree of effort put forth. Now it has come to pass in the providence of God, that the labours of many of our modern missionaries have been attended with even an abundant blessing. They have entered into fields which have proved white already to harvest; and it has seemed, as in the case of the Sandwich Islands, that nothing remained to be done but to thrust in the sickle. There are instances not a few in which, when these self-denied persons commenced their missionary career, they found themselves in the midst of a population on which not one ray of the Sun of Righteousness had ever fallen; a population whose

religion was nothing better than a compound of superstition, impurity and cruelty; and yet before the time had come for writing their history, they have seen around them not a small number of earnest and devoted Christians, who had been raised from the degradation of Paganism; schools in which many Pagan children were acquiring a Christian education; and the whole aspect of things softened and brightened by the hallowed influence of the gospel. Time was when their prayers, if not absolutely solitary, were the prayers of literally two or three gathered together; but they lived to see the time when the notice of a prayer meeting would call together a goodly assembly of devout souls, and those who came would never fail to thank God that He had caused the light to shine upon them amidst the deepest darkness. Nearly all the missionary biographies that have been given to the world, while they exhibit a large amount of sacrifice and suffering,—many instances of hopes deferred, and prospects overcast, and hearts bleeding under the rod,—exhibit yet more of the triumphs of God's truth and grace, in multiplying, even from the most hopeless materials, glorious specimens of the new creation.

Who that reads what Eliot and Brainard accomplished for the poor Indians, or what many of our modern missionaries have accomplished for the Sandwich islanders, for the inhabitants of China, or Hindostan, Turkey, or Syria,—who that reads these records of human effort crowned with God's blessing, but will feel his confidence renewed in the certain triumph of the missionary cause. Let not the ill-natured skeptic, nor yet the half-way Christian, assault me with cavils or doubts in regard to the universal triumph of Christianity. Let neither the one nor the other attempt to weaken my faith or paralyze my efforts by persuading me that there is that in Paganism that will never yield to any influence that can be brought to bear upon it. If he will thus insult me and my religion, I will answer him out of the lives of the missionaries—I will read to him passages that show indubitably that they have not laboured in their own strength; that nothing at which their missions aim, is too hard for Omnipotence; and that they have only to keep on labouring in the spirit of those who have gone before them, and with the measure of success which the past justifies to their hopes, to accomplish, under God, every thing that prophecy has foretold or faith anticipates.

Is there any thing that is so well fitted to call forth vigorous effort in any

cause as the confident hope of success? If I have but faint hopes of accomplishing an object,—no matter how desirable—the languor of my hopes will be likely to impart itself, as an enervating influence to my efforts; whereas if I look with confident expectation to the attainment of my end, while yet I realize that there can be no success apart from exertion, I am in a state of mind to labour most perseveringly and effectively; and it is scarcely more certain that the object which I aim at is within my reach, than that it will be attained. I read the lives of the missionaries, and I see that they have not laboured in vain. I have evidence not to be resisted that the hand of God has already wrought wonders through their instrumentality. Shall I not then, shall not all my fellow-Christians around me, shall not the whole church, animated by the assurance of success, conveyed not only by the word of God, but by the providence of God,—rise up to a tone of more vigorous effort in this great cause? Shall not every heart be strengthened and every hand nerved afresh, for new assaults upon the empire of the prince of darkness?

There is another consideration here which we may not forget—each missionary biography that is written tells of another active labourer withdrawn from the missionary ranks, and of course of a vacancy to be filled by some one devoted to the same high vocation. In reading their instructive works, we do right to pause, and thank God for all that he has accomplished by the subjects of them; and it is almost a thing of course that we follow them to their glorious reward; that we think of them as shouting louder hallelujahs because they have come out of great tribulation. But who shall take up the implements of spiritual labour on earth which they have laid down? who shall succeed to them in their efforts to enlighten and save the poor heathen? Who shall carry forward the work in which they were actively engaged—who shall water the plants of righteousness which have already begun to spring up under their diligent and well-directed culture—who shall quicken the upward tendencies of the spirit that had already begun to rise, and secure to Heaven that which is yet exposed to hell? The answer to these questions falls on the ear and the heart of the church, as a matter of most impressive significance. Other devoted men must enter into the labours of those who are departed. If death takes away from the missionary ranks, yet he must not be allowed to thin them; for the zeal and charity of the church must not only supply the places of those whom he numbers

as his victims, but must constantly add fresh recruits, with a view to extend and quicken these benevolent operations. It is delightful to reflect that each missionary who is called to his rest should thus make provision by the appeal which he sends forth from his grave for filling his place, and that the tidings of his death in connection with the story of his life should come to a thousand hearts as an argument for renewed diligence in the missionary work.

Let it be remembered then that the memoirs of our devoted missionaries will not have fully accomplished their work, unless their effect is felt in a deeper sense of obligation on the part of the church, not only to keep good, but to increase the missionary ranks. Each of these works, as it comes from the press, embalming some honoured and endeared name, calls upon the whole body of the faithful to engage more vigorously, especially in furnishing suitable labourers for the conversion of the world. It calls upon our Education societies to extend their patronage, especially to those who are looking towards the missionary field; while they are careful to encourage none who, on any account, are disqualified for such a destination. It calls upon our young men who hope they have felt the quickening influence of God's Spirit, and are directing their thoughts to the Christian ministry, to remember the millions who are sitting in the region of the shadow of death, and to inquire whether it may not be their duty to carry them the light of life. It calls upon the heads of our Theological seminaries, to cherish with watchful and earnest solicitude the missionary spirit among those whose education they superintend; encouraging, so far as they can, every hopeful disposition for this field of labour. It calls upon Christian parents to strive to the extent of their ability for the conversion of their children, not merely that they may thereby escape hell and obtain Heaven, nor yet merely that they may be honoured as instruments of good to their fellow-creatures, but that, if God will, they may labour directly for the salvation of the poor heathen, and have an important agency in this way in the ultimate conversion of the world. I repeat,—the memoirs of each departed missionary is a standing monition not only to repair the waste of morality, not only to strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die, but to give new life to the missionary enterprize, till there no longer remains any part of the territories of darkness that is not enlightened.

The preceding train of thought, I trust, not only justifies, but honours the efforts which are made from time to time to perpetuate the memories of those who have laboured with signal fidelity and success in the missionary field. It is not too much to say that many of the most attractive as well as edifying works of Christian biography belong to this class; and if there are among them some of inferior interest, yet there are few, if any, which have not their sphere of usefulness. It was a happy thought in the projectors of the present work to bring together in a glorious group so many names which, by common consent, have illumined the records of the missionary enterprise. Though the notices of the several individuals are necessarily brief, to be included within the limits prescribed, yet each article will be found long enough to present, in an impressive manner, an exalted character and a useful life. As these pages, at once historical and commemorative, are read and pondered by the followers of Christ, may the missionary cause receive fresh accessions in both numbers and strength, and may those who are hereafter to engage in this work be the more devoted and the more successful from having contemplated the heroic and martyr-like spirit of so many who have gone before them.