

*18/32*

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### THE MISSIONARY WORLD.

#### THE MISSIONARY IN THE MIDST OF POVERTY.

It is the destiny of most missionaries to witness great displays of wealth, but to come into close and daily relations with poverty. Unto the poor the Gospel is preached. This brief assertion of our Lord is significant of the condition of the race and the resultant attitude toward the divine message. It is divided into rich and poor. A certain number have all that heart could wish. "They are not in trouble as other men." "Their eyes stand out with fatness." They prosper in the world. They increase in riches. As in the days of Asaph, so now the rich are not generally the God-fearing, the devout, the benevolent. They are not disposed to listen to the message of salvation to sinners, lost, ruined, under condemnation. The world is theirs, and they are satisfied.

But by far the greater number are the poor. They are those who have no laid-up resources. They are dependent upon daily labour for daily bread, and often do not know how future wants are to be supplied. They suffer from want and from oppression. "The poor and him that hath no helper" are inseparable terms. They first of all are disposed to give ear to a message of hope and deliverance. There may at first be no apprehension of sin or of spiritual want or spiritual deliverance. Very narrow and earthly views may govern the first movements toward the Gospel, but they are powerful enough to bring numbers of the poor to hear and to receive the great salvation.

Very often one of the first and most keenly felt results is greater stringency in the means of satisfying daily wants. Hostility is raised the poor believer is deprived of employment, and perhaps his children cry for bread which he cannot give them. What shall the missionary do? What course shall he take? He sees that these cases will multiply—that the spiritual blessing which he seeks to bestow will multiply them.

Now, what principles of action shall he, as a missionary, lay down with relation to these his spiritual children in distress?

First, he cannot throw off all responsibility in the case. He cannot say to them, "I have brought you the words of eternal life, but as to your temporal life I have nothing to do with it." If any missionary has ever relieved himself from care and effort in this way, he was probably not worth much as a missionary, although the temptation to do so is sometimes strong.

Secondly, A missionary cannot call upon his society to support these poor converts. That would be to establish a pauper Christianity, and the result would be paupers enough, but no Christianity.

Third. The missionary cannot be reasonably required so to exhaust his own resources for their relief as to endanger his health and the welfare of his family. There seems to be something noble in this, but as a rule is it wise?

But still he has a great and holy duty to perform toward these, his brethren in the Lord.

He must understand them fully. He must get down as nearly as possible into their family life. He must know how they live, what is the food they eat, the clothes they wear, the houses or huts they live in, the occupations upon which they depend for sustenance, their hours of labour or amusement, or listless idleness, their sicknesses, their general sanitary condition, and, indeed, all that relates to their mode of life. I have known families living in wretchedness who only needed advice and encouragement, and to have the better way opened clearly to them, and then the emancipation of poverty came through their own efforts. The most questionable way of aiding the poor is by money. There are cases which demand it, but they are comparatively few.

I hold that one of the most effective ways of bringing a poor family in which the truth has found a lodgment, out of distress and crushing, paralyzing poverty is to introduce an orderly, Christian family life.

(a) A Christian breakfast, the family all present, a blessing asked upon the meal, the children with clean hands and faces, has been often the beginning of a new and more orderly life.

(b) The Sabbath kept sacred from unneces-

sary labour and from amusements, the time devoted to worship, reading and the Sunday school, is another efficient means of rescuing the poor from the squalor of their poverty.

(c) Every one who comes under the enlightening power of the Gospel must grow in knowledge as well as in grace. If parents, their children must be educated. The missionary should insist upon this. In most cases he will find parents ready, often eager, to secure the benefits of education to their children. The idle, careless, shiftless should be dealt with faithfully, and if incorrigible should be set off as not belonging to the Children of Light. Children well trained in schools will not grow up to be paupers.

(d) Schools should always be in part industrial, after a certain age to be governed by circumstances. This is a difficult and laborious part of education, but a most important one. It will teach the dignity of labour and will teach the hands to war and the fingers to fight in the struggle for existence.

It will give character, courage and confidence to youth to feel that he has the use of tools, that he has mastered some of the forces of nature, that he can by his own industry and knowledge provide for himself and be useful to others. However low may have been his condition, this will raise him to a higher level and make him a living force in society.

(e) The missionary must teach the poor to give something every week, however small the sum. It may seem hard, but it is the truest kindness. Our Lord Himself taught it by commending the poor widow who cast in all her living. The gifts of the poor for the support and extension of the Gospel return a hundred-fold into their own bosoms. It way seem to the earthly, materialistic mind a sheer contradiction, but it is true in fact, in philosophy and in the Word of God. The writer has known too many instances to doubt it. Giving for the promotion of a noble object ennobles the soul. It makes it conscious of thus entering into the brotherhood of the benefactors of man and of the disciples of the Lord. It gives a joy that is new and pure. There will be no new efforts at economy, a new inventiveness and industriousness in both saving and earning. Teaching the poor to give systematically, constantly to some noble object is one of the surest ways of relieving their poverty. The causes of poverty are in part mental and moral. The environment may be unfriendly to success, but the personality of the poor man is after all the chief factor. When you change that all is changed. If you find a poor person not susceptible to benevolent and generous Christian motives you may be pretty sure that his poverty is remediless.

(f) The missionary must teach the poor believer to seek help from God. There is prevalence in prayer. The earnest suppliant becomes strong in taking hold of the strength of God. "Give us this day our daily bread" is a hint of what he should do in prayer. By it he walks with God and God walks with him. Such are the methods of God's grace and providence that neither can do his best without the other.

The promises of God are scattered all through the Bible, encouraging and inviting the poor to seek from Him whatever they most need. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." It must be so or the Bible would not be true. I have been young and now am old, but I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor His seed begging bread.

(g) The missionary must laboriously fit himself to be the wise adviser and helper of the poor converts. They must live, and so far as possible a comfortable life. The poor man may be as happy as the rich man, but he must have food and clothing and gratitude and trust in God. And he must obtain all these himself. The greatest kindness the missionary can possibly do is to help him to work, to put him in the way of obtaining his living by his labour. A little assistance in money may sometimes be necessary as a start, but for the most part, aid in money, except to the sick and disabled, is corrupting. The superior intelligence of the missionary and his wider acquaintance with men and things will enable him to open doors which the humble and ignorant convert could never reach. But if there be a native church already formed he may often work more effectively through the officers and more intelligent members of the church.

Persecution, oppression and wrong must