

should unite in asking the Lord to indicate his successor; yet two years more passed away before he could be released from office. He had to bear the brunt of the very difficult controversies of the China and Madagasear Bishopries; and in 1871, only a year and a half before his death, we find him performing a task so relatively easy for a younger colleague as the writing and delivery of the Instructions to departing missionaries. They began thus:—"The Committee address you on the present occasion by the lips of their aged Secretary, who might plead exemption on account of the infirmities of advancing years, but who throws himself upon your candid indulgence, under the exceptional circumstances caused by the absence of younger secretaries." Very significant is the tone of these Instructions. In them Venn acknowledges that thirty years' experience had taught him to moderate his expectations of great and speedy results from missionary effort; and one cannot but remember at the same time that this was the very period of almost low-water mark in missionary zeal and interest which we have already observed in various aspects. All the more touching are the following sentences:—

PART VII.  
1862-72.  
Chap. 68.

Venn's last  
Instructions to  
departing  
missionaries.

Significant  
tone:  
moderated  
expectations.

"The time is, indeed, long gone by, when the sending forth of a body of missionaries raised a song of triumph, as though the world were turned from darkness to light. It has often struck us as significant of this bygone assumption, that a well-known and beautiful hymn, and its appropriate tune, were composed for the departure of the first set of missionaries sent by the London Missionary Society to the South Seas:—

'All hail the power of Jesus' name!  
Let angels prostrate fall;  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown Him Lord of all.'

We trust the hymn is sung with no less fervour of adoration than in olden times, but now rather in the assurance of faith, and in the surveying fields white unto the harvest, than in the bringing in of sheaves into the Lord's garner.

"We were accustomed to tell our missionaries that the Christian's weapons are mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds. So we tell you still, but we are compelled to add that you are not yet so armed. Some of you have to acquire the vernacular, so as to be able to unsheath the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Others of you have laboured abroad; but you tell us that the strongholds of Satan still frown in defiance upon the feeble Christian efforts which are directed against them, and your minds are now agitated with the anxious question how you may best recommence the assault.

"We were accustomed, also, to say of our missionaries that they would be among the Heathen like a candle to give light to all around. Alas! what numbers have failed to impress the Heathen with the beauty of holiness, through their unsubdued carnal infirmities!

"We assured our young missionaries that they went forth bearing the good seed, of which some must spring up to the glory of the grace of God. Alas! how few comparatively have found any good-ground hearers, or even rocky soil, or a lodgment among thorns; they have found nothing but the hard wayside, and not one seed apparently has vegetated.