

HANS EGEDE, THE APOSTLE OF GREENLAND.

In the tenth century a colony or colonies of Norwegians settled in Greenland and carried with them such knowledge of the gospel as they possessed, and the ruins of their homes built around the church and its God's acre, show that religion had a prominent place among them.

How long they flourished, and in what way they perished, we know not; for the ice barrier round their northern home was strong, and the pulse of commerce was slow and weak, so that ages elapsed between their extinction and the knowledge of it in their fatherland. Whether they were swept away by pestilence, or died a lingering death by famine, or gradually diminished in numbers till they all perished, we may not know. It is suggestive in this connection that more than three centuries ago a boat fastened together with sinews drifted ashore in Iceland, containing an oar on which was traced in Runic letters the words, "I grew tired while I drew thee." No doubt they prayed much and fervently in their distress, and the cold icebergs seemed to fling back a stern refusal to their cries, but victory over the last enemy may have been vouchsafed at the time, and centuries after, another answer was given by Him who does not forget the prayers of his children, even long after they have entered into rest.

January 31, 1686, a babe was sent to a humble Norwegian home. The parents welcomed the new comer with true affection and sought to train him up for God, for though they knew not many things familiar to us to-day, their faith may have been more simple and their lives less ambitious and worldly than ours. Like other children in that rugged region, little Hans (Jahn) soon learned to share in the toils and amusements of his elders, and the long winter evenings of that northern clime gave him ample opportunity to gratify his taste for reading. He was a loving and gentle spirit, ever ready to respond to the sorrows of others, and he made such good use of his educational privileges in Copenhagen that he was ordained pastor of the remote parish of Vaagen, or Vogen, as soon as he became of age. Soon after this he was united in marriage to Miss Gertrude Rusk who was destined to be a true helpmeet and source of strength to him amid privations and trials of which their life in that humble manse gave them no conception.

In the course of his reading he became intensely interested in the fate of those colonies that had gone out to Greenland so

long ago and been lost sight of for so many years. He not only longed to know their fate, but feared lest any who still survived might fall away from the truth: and he desired, besides strengthening that which might still remain, to impart the gospel to the heathen around them. For a long time he kept his feelings to himself, not even telling them to his companion, but they were as fire shut up in his bones, and he could not rest.

Frederic IV. was then King of Norway and Denmark and had sent out Ziegenbalg and others as missionaries to Tranquebar in India. This encouraged him to apply in behalf of Greenland, and in 1710, just three years after his settlement at Vaagen, he sent a memorial to the King and wrote to his own Bishop of Drontheim and to Rindulf Bishop of Bergen, to support his petition. It shows his ardor that in an age when missionary societies were unknown he pushed forward alone, and it shows his practical spirit that he obtained such influential men to second his appeal.

This application to the King, however, gave publicity to his desires, and his people at once set themselves against the undertaking. They even stirred up his own family to oppose him. Hans Egede tried at first to comply with their wishes, but the more he tried to give up the work, the greater was his distress. His companion saw this, and was induced to listen to him, and pray over the matter, and the result was a sympathy with his plans that never wavered, but ever helped him over hard places, where otherwise he himself had gone backward. Her sympathy so encouraged him now that he addressed a memorial to the College of Missions, and again intreated the bishops to second his petition. They, however, received him coldly and the whole subject was deferred from year to year under various pretexts. Meantime he met with nothing but misunderstanding and ridicule. Things were laid to his charge that he knew not. He was accused by some of insanity, and by others of ambition to become the Bishop of Greenland.

So far from yielding to opposition, he made a journey to the Capital and pressed his suit in person before the King who granted him an interview. The result was a royal order that those who had knowledge of the Arctic regions should send in their opinions to the Court, and they were so decided in their opinions that he became the object of even greater derision. At length he prevailed on a few men to subscribe £40 apiece, with £60 from himself, and then by dint of patient labour he got together £2,000 in all, and with this a vessel was