

Mission Field.

A Nova Scotia Hero.

BY REV. A. W. M'LEOD, PH.D.

Born in Banff, Scotland, in 1815, the next year he was brought to Pictou, N.S., where his parents afterwards resided. "Little Johnnie Geddie" was early dedicated to God by his godly parents, with the secret desire in their hearts that one day he might preach Christ to the lost ones in the "regions beyond."

Though reticent and gentle beyond most boys, there was in him a determined persistence; he would set his face like a flint, kindly, but with indomitable perseverance, until success crowned his effort. His ability was known only to those that saw beneath the quiet exterior the spirit of the lad. His father being a clockmaker, "Johnnie" could not get much assistance from him, but, like many of the world's best men, had to work his own way.

At 22 he graduated, was licensed to preach and settled in Cavendish and New London, in the Presbytery of Prince Edward Island. Love to Christ impelled him to go to the heathen, but there was no opening, and no means, and, worst of all, no clear disposition in the mind of the church to send the Gospel to the heathen. Home work required more men and money than could be obtained.

How love makes one work, despising all difficulties, however great, when the cause is Christ's! Did John Geddie forget his darling purpose, while engrossed in pastoral duties at Cavendish? Not for one moment. He laid the matter before the throne. He kept it there. Then he wrote and preached on missions and the need of the lost world. His letters in the local papers and in the Presbyterian Banner attracted attention, and were discussed widely. The agitation began. He won many of the people, then the Presbytery of Prince Edward Island, and finally, after an appeal to all the Presbyteries, he won the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia to his view. It was decided to occupy some field in the far away South Seas, and Mr. John Geddie was appointed to represent the church as her missionary. This important step was taken in 1844.

His work should be appreciated more when it is known that missions at that time were unpopular in this branch of the church, rare, and exceedingly difficult to operate. The church that he moved to hold the ropes, while he ventured into the dark mine, consisted of only 30 congregations and 5,000 members. Travel was tedious in the extreme. Think of eight days' tossing on the sea from Halifax to Boston, 170 days from Boston to Honolulu! Did his herculean labors quell his ardor or hinder his efforts? On the contrary, they stimulated him to greater diligence. Fire destroyed his house in Cavendish, death snatched his two little girls away shortly before his leaving home. But Christ was with him.

After a brief residence in Samoa, Mr. and Mrs. Geddie settled at Anelcauhaut on the island of Anaitum in the New Hebrides group. He was the first missionary to begin work there. Teachers from Tanna had preceded him, but accomplished nothing. The vast, dark system was intact. Look at it. Women were treated as degraded slaves, beaten, sold, or killed at the caprice of their husbands. Infanticide was universal. Cannibalism prevailed throughout the entire group of islands. Fathers killed and ate their own children. Chiefs killed men for their food. Gods, called natimasses, terrorized the islands. Their sacred men made diseases, sent storms, took life, at the will of the natimasses. When a man died his wife was immediately strangled by her eldest son so that she might accompany her husband to the land of darkness. So common was this common practice on Anaitum, that in a population of 4,000, not one old woman could be found. Nowhere on the globe was degradation more complete or the first chapter of Romans more literally illustrated.

With strong faith in Christ and a brave heart and firm purpose, Mr. Geddie attacked this gross wickedness. He carried on his work with such skill and tact that success

came where otherwise certain failure would result. His faith in God and quiet heroism swept away every barrier, he could not be terrified from his post. Heathen intrigues, intrigues of vile traders, intrigues of the sacred men, could not move him. Trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for strength, he tolled on. Now a club is aimed at his head by a man angered because the sin of strangling widows is denounced; now a band of men come to take his life, but return without laying hands on him. Now a brother of the chief of the island, named Kapalo, watches behind a tree near the mission house to kill him; at the critical moment, the murderer's arm falls powerless at his side. Not long after, he confesses his sin to Mr. Geddie, and yields his soul to Christ. Then the fierce chief Viapi surrenders to Jesus and turns his powers on the enemy; then a little later, the old Chief Nohat gives himself to the Lord.

Thus, by the strong blows given, heathenism began to totter. By persistent teaching and holy living, by quiet suppression of heathen customs, one by one, the entire system gave way, churches were built, the children trained in schools and in godly homes. Anaitum became a centre from which light radiated to other islands all through the group. It became a crown of glory in the annals of missionary endeavor. The veteran Dr. Geddie, taken ill at his post, having seen heathenism buried and his successor established, sailed to Australia, and died a few days later at Geelong. The epitaph, written by his co-labourer on another island, Dr. Inglis, is often quoted in showing what God did through one active endeavor for Christ. "When he landed in 1848, there were no Christians here, and when he left in 1872, there were no heathen." Nova Scotia has many heroes and heroines in her illustrious roll of honor, and of these, in the memories and hearts of her best children, Dr. John Geddie and his devoted wife occupy the foremost place.

AMONG THE LEPERS.

The Hard Case of the European Lepers in India and the East, and what the Mission might do to Help Them, if the Necessary Means were at Command.

ACCORDING to the conclusion arrived at by the Government Commission on Leprosy, the disease is not of a very infectious or contagious character; and, with ordinary and reasonable precautions, the healthy may avoid contracting the disease even if brought into contact with the lepers. As has been stated in former papers, under the above heading, this conclusion is fully borne out by the experience of the missionaries, who work amongst the lepers, while suffering from the worst types of the disease, and during the worst stages of it; attending to and caring for the helpless; dressing open sores, and such like; and handling the lepers with impunity.

Then again, there is the other significant fact,—apparently healthy persons—natives and non-natives—do fall a prey to this terrible disease. As the saying is,—“the leper dies, but leprosy lives on.”

The disease is undoubtedly endemic in India and the East, and in some other lands as well. As far as the natives are concerned, their liability to contract or escape the disease very probably depends largely on their habits of life; diet; the sanitary conditions of their surroundings; their high or low vital tone; predisposition to attack, not so sufficiently understood as to be provided against or counteracted; even their fatalism may interfere with their use of precautions; and, possibly, heredity, although that, as a cause for the continuance of leprosy, is not laid much stress upon by the Leprosy Commission, indeed it has been almost ignored and set aside by them, as a cause hardly worth the taking into account.

But the habits and conditions of life of the non-natives and Eurasians, the better class of whom live as the Europeans do, are so different, that it is difficult to account for their falling victims to the disease, on that score; and so far as purely non-natives are concerned, the unlikelihood of any possibility of heredi-

tary taint may be taken for granted. It is not easy to dismiss the idea that the contracting of the disease by Europeans cannot be ultimately, or rather immediately, traced to contagion in some form or other.

When it is realized how freely the lepers are allowed to go about among the healthy (their being socially outcasts does not hinder their doing so), the existence of danger is hardly to be ignored.

There are many contributive causes to this danger, for instance: the common use of tanks and water supplies; inoculation through flies or some other medium; and in the concealment, especially in its incipient stage, on the part of the leper, on account of the supposed disgrace, and consequent misery to himself on the existence of the disease becoming known, there lies a very great source of danger, as not being so easily guarded against,—lepers selling and handling food, preparing it for use; acting in the capacity of household servants; handling and fondling the children of the family; in all such ways there may be danger where least suspected. If the disease were of a highly contagious nature, it would spread through the whole community. Even slightly contagious as it is supposed to be, there must be a certain amount of danger abroad. And that the risk of contagion, even if slight, is a very real one, seems to be proved by the number of European lepers that have fallen victims to the disease.

The term “European” embraces Europeans, Americans and Eurasians—that is persons of mixed race,—in short, all non-natives, or those of mixed race of whatever nationality.

There are a large number of such afflicted with leprosy in India and the East. Many cases are known, but it is quite understood that the known cases do not comprehend the whole, nor nearly the whole of the afflicted of this class of lepers; and besides those remaining in the countries where the disease was contracted, it is more than suspected—in fact it is well known, that a good many in their sore distress, betake themselves, for refuge, to their native lands, carrying with them the germs of this loathsome and incurable disease, to the danger of their healthy fellow-countrymen, while the victims hide themselves and their troubles in back streets and out-of-the-way places, their whereabouts perhaps unknown to friend or relative, to languish and die of a disease obscure and unfamiliar to the people about them.

It is all very pitiful!—and they are of our race,—our own “kith and kin!” Who has not some friend or relative in those lands, liable to such a fate as this, but for God's grace! Surely, surely we will not let our brotherly love fall short of brotherly kindness,—how should the love of God dwell in us if we did!—were we to make no effort to succor these poor afflicted ones.

The provision made for the native lepers is no provision for these poor Europeans. Some would rather die than avail themselves of it,—rather than be forced to consort with the natives in the asylums. These asylums are no grand edifices, with facilities for classification. They are, for the most part, but a few huts clustered together,—huts, such as the natives are used to, only cleaner and healthier, but hardly homes for Europeans—sick Europeans.

Is it much wonder their whole nature should revolt from the prospect of such a fate! All their life long they have been accustomed to the habits and amenities of European households. Many of them are cultured and refined men and women, to whom their habits of life are a necessity—a second nature and not a luxury which they might forego. Such a life as the native heathen live to them would be abhorrent,—a fate compared to which death itself, however lonely and pitiful, would be preferred as happiness by them. No wonder they shrink from it, and flee away in search of rest!

Homes are being provided for the native lepers, by the mission, to the extent the funds are forthcoming. Thank God for every heart He makes willing to aid these poor things—they are sorely in need of all the help they can get and a great deal more; and it is hoped that each year as it comes round may have its tale to tell of increasing sympathy and help for them;—their case is as hard a one as can be, unless it be the case of the poor European