

OUR MISSIONS IN FIFTY YEARS.

ADDRESS AT DR. M'CULLOCH'S JUBILEE.

To sketch the work of nearly fifty years upon a canvas of about half as many minutes, necessitates the barest outline, and I can only ask the patience of those to whom that outline may be a familiar story.

Fifty years ago our foreign mission work was confined to a few individual contributions sent to societies abroad. As a church we did nothing. But as we view our foreign mission work to-day we see flowing by us a stream, broad and deep, and, like the river of Ezekiel's vision, ever growing broader and deeper, carrying life to the moral wastes of our world.

Looking up the stream we see it dividing, like the river that watered Eden, into four heads, each having its source in a different branch of what is now the Presbyterian Church in Canada. After the fashion of the early voyageurs let us explore these tributary streams, trace their origin, not in mountain springs, but in loving hearts; measure their length, not in miles, but in years; their volume, not in feet and fathoms, but in work; their result, not in the products of alluvial acres, but in the fruit of the Spirit borne by once savage lives.

Beginning with the longest branch, that of the

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NOVA SCOTIA, the first sign on the page of history, of our work that was to be, is a scene in a sick room in the old Scottish town of Banff. A baby boy seems dying. Anxious parents bend over him, their hearts wrung with the anguish that only parents can know. There, as they pray, they vow, that if his life is spared, they will devote him to the service of God, to go if it is His will, to the heathen.

Then, just as a mountain spring sometimes comes forth, again disappears, working its way through rock and soil, and again comes forth in larger volume as the head waters of some noble stream, so for years we see nothing of our foreign mission work, but it is there, working down the thoughts and prayers of those parents, and by the blessing of God upon missionary literature which comes in his way, permeating the life of the son until it appears in his own resolve, to go, if the way were opened, to the foreign field.

John Geddie, the pioneer in every respect of our foreign mission work, both in the church at home, arousing her to undertake it, and in the field as her first missionary, was born April 10th, 1815, and was thus not very far from the age of the father in whose honor we are gathered to-day.

When about a year old his parents came to Pictou and thus the two grew in knowledge side by side. They filled one church, one school, one playground, with their worship and work and glee, and, while laboring for one common end, their lives have been, and their graves will be, severed far and wide by mountain, stream and sea.

I have spoken of the vow of Geddie's parents. The Spirit of God seems to have wrought by the same means, the same consecration in the son. From earliest years he desired to preach the gospel, and if possible to the heathen, but while studying for the ministry his health failed. In that sickness, though at the time he knew nothing of the dedication made by his parents, he solemnly pledged himself that if life were spared and the way opened he would be a missionary. How often God uses affliction to crystallize into shape and action, feelings and wishes that may have long been in solution in our hearts!

He was licensed May 2, 1837, but our church had no foreign mission of her own. He did not see his way to leave her, and well for her that he did not. He accepted a call to Cavendish and New London, P. E. Island, and was ordained there March 13, 1838, so that if he had lived, his jubilee would have been celebrated last March.

Working earnestly at home, his interest in foreign missions grew stronger. He organized a missionary society in his own congregation, and led his co-presbyters to do the same in theirs. The next step in his cherished plan was to induce the church to undertake a mission of her own. Quietly and persistently he wrought with voice and pen. In July, 1843, the year that the church in Scotland was rent by disruption, an overture was introduced for the first time into our Synod to undertake a mission to the heathen.

The overture was sent down to the three Presbyteries, and next year's synod appointed a Foreign Mission Committee to investigate, collect funds, and report.