

WHAT THE ANGLO-SAXON RACE OWES TO MISSION- ARY WOMEN.

The descendants of the early Saxons in England or America should be the last to disparage the positive and aggressive influence of women in mission work; since none may so directly trace their own evangelization to that influence as they. When Gregory the Great, having become interested in some Saxon youths offered for sale in the slave-market of Rome (v. D. 585) and planned a mission to the British Isles, he found difficulty in securing men of sufficient courage to venture upon those savage shores. Augustine and his thirty or forty missionary associates actually turned back after starting for Britain, owing to the accounts which were given them of the ferocity of the people, and of the alleged certainty that the whole party would be sacrificed on heathen altars.

But a woman had ventured upon those shores, and prepared the way. The young Princess Bertha, daughter of one of the Kings of the Franks in Gaul, had been married to Ethelbert, King of Kent; and as a Christian she had insisted upon the condition in her marriage that she should be allowed to observe the rites of her own religion, and that she should take with her a Frankish Bishop as a chaplain. Her Saxon husband, won by her piety and elevation of character, had even permitted the erection of a little church near Canterbury, where, through years of faithfulness, though amid the surroundings of absolute heathen darkness, she worshipped her Saviour in simplicity and in truth.

Gregory considered her influence a providential entering wedge; and it was the hope inspired by her presence which encouraged the missionaries to land in Britain A.D. 597.

Contrary to their fears they were received most graciously by the King, who after a short time permitted them to worship in Bertha's chapel. At the following Whitsuntide they were permitted to administer baptism to King Ethelbert himself; and on the next Christmas day, as Pope Gregory in a letter informs his brother, the Patriarch of Alexandria, "upwards of ten thousand men of Kent received baptism in the waters of the Stole." Augustine became the first Bishop of Canterbury.

It is worthy of note that about the time that Augustine baptized the King of Kent, Columbus died in his distant

monastery of Iona, neither of the two knowing that ere long two waves of Christian evangelization would meet on the shores of York and Northumberland—one set on foot by an Irish monk on a lonely island of northwestern Scotland, the other by a Frankish Princess in the Court of Ethelbert.

Twenty years after the landing of Augustine another advance of the truth was made to the northward, through much the same influence as before. A faithful mother has borne and trained a faithful daughter. Ethelburra, daughter of Bertha, when given in marriage to Edwin King of Northumbria, under the same stipulation that her mother had made. She took with her Bishop Paulinus as chaplain to the Northumbrian Court.

The life of Edwin had been strangely checkered by vicissitudes. He had been carried to Wales in his childhood, to avoid sure destruction at the hands of a usurper. In his wanderings and despondency he had seen in a vision one who promised that he should yet learn of a new life and a better law than his fathers had known. Moved by this circumstance, together with the influence of his wife and her chaplain, he became, when a king, so thoughtful that he finally called a council of his thanes and priests to consider the question of a new religion. They met about twenty miles from the city of York, where was enacted one of the most striking scenes in the history of missionary enterprise.

After one and another had spoken, Coifi, the High Priest of Woden, arose, and after frankly stating that he had always derived his support from the Norse religion, he yet counselled that they should listen to any who could if possible, tell them of a better way. He was followed by one of the King's thanes, who said: "The life of man in this world, O King, may be likened to what happeneth when thou art sitting at supper with thy thanes in the time of winter: a fire is blazing on the hearth, and the hall is warm; without, the rain and the snow are falling, and the wind is howling, suddenly there cometh a sparrow and flieth through the house; she entereth by one door and goeth out by another; while she is within the house she feeleth not the howling blast, but when the short space of rest is passed, she flieth out again into the storm, and passeth away from our eyes. Even so it is with the brief life of man; it appeareth for a little while, but what precedeth it or what cometh after it, we know not at all. Wherefore if this