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## Sweet Surprises.

BY LISA A. FLETCHER.

THERE are times of sweet surprises,  
When God giveth to the soul  
Revelations of His mercies  
Writ upon life's purest scroll.

It may be some dear blessing  
We had prayed and wished for long—  
Yet had scarcely dared to hope for—  
That comes to fill our hearts with song.

Or the kindly light it may be,  
Beaming from some tender eyes,  
Where we have no claim of friendship  
That stirs us with a glad surprise.

Or the first sweet breath of springtide  
By the south wind softly stirred,  
Fragrant blossoms of the April,  
Or early bluebird we have heard.

Or the friendship more than precious  
Which finds expression of its love,  
By some all unlooked-for token  
Which falls like sunshine from above.

Yes, along life's dusty waysides  
Springeth many a pure delight,  
Bringing all the joy of morning  
Into the winter of our night!

—New York Observer.

## Education and Missions.

REV. A. J. GORDON, D.D.

IS multitudinism or individualism the true method in missions? The Roman Catholic theory has been, "Bring men into the Church, in order to bring them to Christ;" the Protestant theory has been, "Bring men to Christ, in order to bring them into the Church." It is obvious that, according as the one or the other of these ideals prevails, the order of missionary procedure must radically differ. Education first and foremost, if the masses are to be nurtured into a condition where they shall be fit to be saved by faith in Christ. But is this according to the Divine plan? Is the now birth the graduating degree in the school of Christianity, or is it the matriculation into that school? The record of the Church's beginnings reads, "And the same day there were added about three thousand souls." Added to whom? Not to the Christian community merely. A parallel statement reads, "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women"—multitudinism, but through individualism! The ecclesiastical tens and hundreds gained only through the believing units, and whether by ones or by thousands, all "added to the Lord!" Jesus Christ is the Divine Unit, the one and only Centre of accretion to which all increase is related. Indeed, the phrase "added to the Church" occurring in our common version (Acts 2: 49) is unknown to the original. Such a conception as a church standing as a portico to Christ, or as an introductory school to Christ, seems to be unknown to the New Testament.

Dr. George Smith considers that the conversion of Constantine, with the subsequent looming up of the ambitious legend, "By this sign conquer," marks the first step in a

fatally wrong policy of Christian aggression. "From a purely missionary point of view," he says, "it began a system of compromise with error, of nationalism instead of individualism in conversion, which in the East made the church an easy prey to Mohammedanism, and in the West produced Jesuit missions."

Let the reader mark the words which we have quoted: "nationalism instead of individualism in conversion." They contain the crucial question of missionary policy. If we will conform to God's order for this dispensation, and labour for an elective outgathering instead of a universal ingathering; seeking individual conversions instead of grasping after national conquests, we shall be found in a way that has always proved safe in the history of missions. The "*In hoc signo vinces*" as interpreted by Constantine and his successors marks a total break with the whole spirit of apostolic and primitive Christianity. The cross indeed! But "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto Me and I unto the world;" not the cross emblazoned on banners and inscribed on the Labarum moving on for the subjection of the nations to Christianity. The work distinctly appointed for this present time is the gathering of the Ecclesia—the called out. Not that we would question for a moment the ultimate conversion of the world. When "that which is in part shall be done away," and "whon that which is perfect shall come," then indeed shall our Lord Jesus have "dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the end of the earth." But the time of this consummation is not yet.

Now, a misconception of the present purpose and aim of foreign missions has undoubtedly had much to do with fostering these large and expensive schemes for educating the heathen about which many thoughtful people are beginning to cherish such grave doubts. Substitute civilization for evangelization as the work of the Christian Church among the heathen, or identify civilization and evangelization as essentially the same, and secular education will come more and more to the front. On the contrary, let the idea be held firmly that the first work of the missionary is to promote individual conversions and gather churches of regenerated souls, and inevitably the work of educating unbelieving heathen will fall to the rear. And for this reason emphasize conversion and the idea will soon emphasize itself that only converted persons are capable of being thoroughly instructed in the things of the kingdom of heaven. It is written in Scripture and in many forms reiterated that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them." Therefore the obvious conclusion must be. Seek to have men born of the Spirit, that they may be qualified for instruction in the doctrines of the Spirit. There is a saying so true and scriptural that it is worthy of being inscribed over the door of every mission house: "*In man's school the pupil seeks to know in order to believe, in God's school the pupil must believe in order to know.*" Therefore conversion first and culture afterward.