

For Dominion Presbyterian.

Part V. Protestant Missions in Africa.

By James Croil.

BLANTYRE.

In the matter of testifying their appreciation of Livingstone's labors, and worthily perpetuating his memory in the land of his adoption, the church of Scotland, though somewhat slower in its movements than we have seen the Free Church to have been, was no less in earnest. The late Dr. McRae of Hawick set the log a-rolling in the General Assembly of 1874—"To establish a mission in that part of Africa hallowed by the labors and the death of Dr. Livingstone—our illustrious countrymen." A committee was appointed to interview Lieut. Young. They also met Chuma and Susi, the faithful boys who had brought their master's body to be laid to rest in Westminster Abbey.

The committee commenced writing up the mission, subscriptions came in, volunteers offered their services. The first to respond to the call was Henry Henderson, son of the late Dr. Henderson of Kinclaven, Perthshire, who had accompanied the Free church party of the previous year, to see how the land lay. In the meantime, a small steamer was being built and other arrangements were made. The party sailed from London in May, 1876. It consisted of seven persons—Mr. Henderson, Dr. Macklin of Glasgow, a gardener from Muthil, a blacksmith and a captain from Aberdeen, a joiner from Edinburgh, and a seaman and boat-builder from Broughty Ferry. There was not a minister in the party. Henderson had selected a site about 150 miles, as the crow flies, from Cape McLearn, near Lake Shirwa, in the Highlands of the Shire, on a plateau 3000 feet above sea-level, answering all the requirements of an advantageous settlement—healthy, well watered, a good soil, and among friendly natives.

Not far off, on the slopes of Mount Lomba, a Scotch firm have a large sugar and coffee plantation, producing, it is said, the finest quality of coffee that goes to the London market. Though not a missionary agency, it is helpful to the mission, affording facilities for educational and evangelistic work among the native employees.

The route of the Church of Scotland party was much the same as that of the Free Church company in the previous year, only that their waterway terminated at the foot of the Murchison rapids, whence they had to foot it, up-hill work all the way, some thirty miles to Blantyre so called after Livingstone's birth-place. Here Henderson had provided temporary buildings for their accommodation. As soon as they had recovered from their fatigues, and the effects of the fever which nearly all had contracted en route, the village site was mapped out with mathematical precision. One after another, shapely buildings arose on one side of the square. On the opposite side there came to be a well-stocked garden, some acres in extent, providing a supply of fruit, vegetables and flowers for the colony. From the centre of the square well-made roads branched off in different directions. The main approach from the Shire river is by a wide avenue lined on either side by rows of trees. In the centre of the square there now stands the new church

—the crowning glory of the place—one of the finest churches in South Africa, planned by the resident missionary, Rev. Dr. Scott, and built entirely by native labour.

Before inspecting the church, let us take a stroll through the village. Here is the school house with some 250 boys and girls under native teachers, all busy at the three R's, and about as well-behaved as an equal number of white scholars any where else. And here is the "smiddy" and the carpenter's shop, and the doctor's dispensary, and the teachers houses, and so forth, until you come to the manse, the most inviting of all, with its pretty garden, the roses, dahlias, gladiolas, mignonette and sweet pea, reminding you of home and making you wonder if the Hebrew prophet had not something of this kind in his minds' eye when he penned the familiar lines—"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

The mission staff at Blantyre—including the out stations of Domasi and Mlanje—consists of five ordained missionaries, 10 male and 15 female European teachers and assistants. In 1878 there were 517 native Christians, 382 communicants, and over 1000 pupils in the schools.

The first minister to join the mission was Rev. Duff MacDonald in 1878. He was succeeded in 1881 by the Rev. David Clement R. Scott, D.D., F.R.S.G.S., etc., still at the head of the mission—a man eminent alike for his erudition his consecration to the work, and his extraordinary versatility of character. He can turn his hand to anything, and adapt himself to any circumstances. All went well for fifteen years, when three of the most valuable members of the staff, together with the wife and child of one of them, were removed by death within three short months. First, Mrs. Henderson, next, Cleland, then Bowie, then Henderson the pioneer.

Mr. Cleland, a native of Edinburgh, seems to have been a young minister of deep piety and full of missionary zeal. But he was only permitted to serve the mission for a little more than three years, when he died of fever. Dr. John Bowie—the beloved physician—was cut down in the midst of his usefulness. He performed a skillful and dangerous operation for diphtheria, first on Mrs. Henderson's little boy, then upon herself; both died, and he, having done his duty fearlessly, calmly laid himself down to die of the same malignant disease. Henderson, shattered in health and broken down with sorrow, was ordered home. But he got only as far as Quittimane—the nearest sea-port—where his noble spirit took its flight. His services to the mission had been invaluable. He had received a full university education in arts and literature; though he could not preach, he worked in many other ways with a will, finding his chief happiness in ministering to the comfort and happiness of others. The workman is often taken away, but the work of the Master goes on.

I am well aware that these fragmentary sketches convey a very imperfect idea of the rise and progress of Protestant Missions in Africa. The subject is, like the country, very large, and it has not yet been set to history. The theme is an in-

venting one. Materials abound in the printed annual reports, the "Memorial," "Jubilee," and "Centennial" volumes of the various missionary societies, and in the published biographies of eminent missionaries. The latest centennial is that of the Church Missionary Society in 3 volumes, by Elliott, Stock, London, 1899; price, 18 shillings—the most valuable contribution to the Literature of Missions which the century has produced. The S.P.G. Society published its "Results of 150 years of Work," in 1881. The Baptist Missionary Society published its 100 years of missionary enterprise in 1897; The American Board (A.B.C.F.M.) issued its history of 75 years' work in 1885, and the Moravians, their "Third jubilee of Missions" in 1882. Histories of the Continental Societies are also numerous and valuable.

Who is to write the History of Protestant Missions in Africa? Certainly no one could wield the enchanter's wand more gracefully than Dr. Lovedale, whose long and varied experience in the field specially fit him for such a work. Among the numerous Lives of Missionaries in Africa are the following English editions:

Dr. John Theodore Vanderkemp, 1799-1811, whose missionary zeal has not been surpassed since the days of the Apostles. Barrabas Shaw, who founded the first Wesleyan Methodist Station in South Africa. Samuel Gobat (afterwards missionary Bishop of Jerusalem), and Isenburg, the pioneers of Abyssinia. Add to these the more recent biographies of Robert and Mary Moffat, David and Mary Livingstone, Joseph Mullens, Secretary of the London Missionary Society, Bishop Hannington, Bishop Crowther, Alexander Mackay of Uganda, Miss Whately, daughter of the late Archbishop of Dublin, who spent thirty years in Cairo, educating and elevating thousands of Moslem and Jewish children, and winning the hearts of hosts of Egyptian women, and Bishop William Taylor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, U.S.A., whose "self-supporting mission," with its one hundred unsalaried workers, is an object lesson and a surprise to the World of Missions.

Punctuality.

Being just in time is a great deal better than being a little behind time. And being just in time is even better than being a little ahead of time. It is sometimes said of a man, as if it were to his credit, that he always aims to be ten minutes ahead of time in an appointment. But why should a man waste ten minutes or five minutes, on every appointment he makes? With a busy man who has ten or twenty appointments a day, five or ten minutes lost or frittered away at every appointment is quite an item in life. A good man ought to value time too highly to waste it in any such way as that. It is true that he may be delayed by an accident on his way, and that, if he always allow time for such an emergency, he is less likely to fail of always being in time. But, on the other hand, if a man starts too early, he may meet with an accident which he would have avoided by waiting a few minutes. The best way in this busy world is to aim at being always on time. There is no improvement on that.—Christian Advocate.