

THE CAREY EPOCH IN MISSIONS.

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The closing years of the eighteenth century constitute in the history of Protestant missions an epoch indeed, since they witnessed nothing less than a revolution, a renaissance, an effectual ending of the old, a substantial inauguration of the new. And 1792 is *annus mirabilis*, the famous date from which to reckon forward and backward. Well may it stand with 44 A.D., when the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them;" or 53 A.D., when in vision Paul was called to lay the foundations of the Gospel in heathen Europe. Before attempts to evangelize the world had been few, feeble, and far apart; sporadic also and isolated, without connection or continuity, and hence the results had been superficial and transient. No uprising and onset of the Christian Church had hitherto been seen. Kings or trading companies were movers and promoters, and political and commercial considerations held a prominent place. But now came an entire change of basis, of method, of idea. A general movement was started, a trend was taken, or a tide set in which ever since has been rising and spreading with force irresistible. Whatever has been accomplished since can be traced to forces which began to operate almost exactly a hundred years ago. And, further, in all that momentous period William Carey is easily not only the chief figure, but the supreme personal force—yes, under God the efficient cause of the surprising changes brought to pass. We may speak of the Carey epoch with as much propriety as of the Luther-Reformation. We may as fitly term him the apostle of modern missions as Paul the apostle to the Gentiles, or Ulfilas the apostle to the Goths, or Augustine apostle to the Britons, or Boniface apostle to the Germans.

A preliminary glance is in order at what had already been achieved, and at the status existing when the Spirit of God began mightily to move upon the soul of this humble Baptist cobbler-preacher. Gustavus Vasa and his successors had undertaken something in behalf of the pagan Lapps. The Dutch in the East Indies had done superficial work, and with results numerically large. In the early years of the century King Frederick IV. of Denmark had sent Von Westen to Upper Norway, Hans Egede to Greenland, and Ziegenbalg and Plutschow to Southern India. And Tranquebar had become a name well known and held in honor, and especially while Schwartz (1750-96) wrought with such marked energy and wisdom. In the century following Eliot and the Mayhews toil in behalf of the American Indians had been carried on (1734-57) by Brainerd, Sergeant, Edwards and Zeisberger. Most of all and best of all was the sublime missionary movement inaugurated by Zinzendorf and the Moravian Church, which in a single generation had carried the heralds of the cross to Greenland, the West Indies, America, and South Africa, and led others to attempt an entrance into Egypt, Abyssinia, Persia, Ceylon, China and Siberia. But