

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

IN MEMORIAM.

A LATE TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF TWO GOOD MEN.

THE LATE JOHN ROBSON, OF SARNIA.

During the last twelve months have passed to their "exceeding great reward, two good men to whose memory no tribute has been paid in any religious journal, in Canada at least. It is desired to remedy this omission so far as possible by a brief and heartfelt though tardy tribute to the Christ-like lives and labours of two men whose memories are appropriately conjoined, though one died comparatively young, and in distant China, while the other passed away in a good old age, after a life of little noted labour for Christ in our own land.

The last referred to must be mentioned first. His name was John Robson, a name well known to the Christian hearts of Sarnia, and to some in other places also. He left his native Scotland in his youth, and first took up his abode in Perth, where he was most indefatigable in Sabbath school teaching, in gathering neglected children to be instructed, in visiting the poor and sick—acting, in fact, as a voluntary lay missionary. About 1840 he left Perth and came to settle in Sarnia, mainly because at Perth there was abundance of religious teaching and Christian workers, while at Sarnia there was a sad scarcity of both. The late Hon. Malcolm Cameron, in the absence of churches and settled ministers, had public worship every Sabbath in his own house, conducted either by himself or by any minister who happened to be within reach, and also organized a Sabbath school, taught by himself and Mrs. Cameron, until the need was supplied by the opening of the Union Sabbath school. Needing assistance very much in such circumstances, Mr. Cameron appealed to his friend John Robson to "come over and help," so that through the instrumentality of his experienced Christian labours the life of the new village might be moulded by the influence of Christian principles. With apostolic readiness Mr. Robson answered the appeal, and came to labour literally with heart and hand in his Master's work. No service was too humble for him to do willingly in that cause. Whether the service or Sabbath school were held in private house, school house or town hall, he would sweep the floor, dust the seats, light the candles, and make the fire, as well as teach his class with the eloquence of thorough earnestness. He was for many years an elder of the church, and, it need hardly be said, an elder who did an elder's duty. He visited the sick and afflicted, expostulated with the careless, conducted cottage meetings with much vigour, and when the railway was in progress would walk any distance to address a little gathering of "navvies" concerning everlasting life. Besides these duties, he was always at work, distributing tracts, lending good books, acting as a sort of voluntary colporteur, yet working so quietly and unobtrusively, especially in his later days, labouring unnoticed and even unthanked in the outlying district where he lived, that many around him knew nothing of him, while he went faithfully on with his work, visiting the poorest and the worst, and ministering not only to their bodily needs, but also, out of his own means, to their bodily ones as well. He occupied during his life several different positions, all with a single eye to God's glory. He was an earnest Bible student—no mean theologian—and was so admirable a Bible class teacher that he was called by his friends "an Encyclopedia of Scripture knowledge." Those who look back to his life after an intimate acquaintance with much of it, cannot recall a fault in his character, unless it were his carrying self-forgetfulness to an extreme, so as to be somewhat careless of his dress. Notwithstanding this, and his being a very "plain man," one who knew him well testifies that she "grew up regarding him as a Hindoo does the most venerated Fakir."

For some years before his death he had been laid aside by age and infirmity from all work except work for his Divine Master, in which he never grew weary. To the last he was interested in all Christian work, but especially in Foreign Missions. Others have or can get the Bible, he would say; the heathen *must* have teachers. He shewed his interest practically by liberal contributions to various missions. It need hardly be said that he spent very little on himself, and gave away in money or books what must have

amounted to a large sum; yet to the surprise of his friends who thought he gave away all he had, he left a considerable legacy to Foreign Missions. "To the last," writes one of his truest friends, "his mind was clear, happy and cheerful, urging everyone to love, fear and serve God. His advice was as sound, his reasoning as clear as it ever was." After a painful illness of some weeks, death released him from suffering and weakness, and he went to his rest at the ripe age of eighty-three, to receive, as no one can doubt, the welcome of "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Yet he died unnoted by the Church or the world, and the lack of fitting tribute to his memory wounded the faithful hearts who knew and appreciated his apostolic life. Said one of these, in reference to the omission, "No man remembereth the poor man whose wisdom saved the city." To atone to some extent for the omission of what was certainly due to his memory in this respect, this brief notice of him though late, has been written by one who regrets very much that it was not done sooner. It should be added that one of Mr. Robson's sons at least entered the ministry, though not that of the Presbyterian Church, and worthily bears his father's name, the Rev. Ebenezer Robson, of Lachute, P. Q. John Robson's life made the Church richer while he lived, and the memory of such should be preserved as its best heritage.

THE REV. ALBERT WHITING.

The other to whom it is desired to record a somewhat tardy tribute was a former labourer in our Home Mission fields some six or seven years ago. The son of a wealthy American, educated at Princeton, he visited, in connection with his father's business, some of our most recently settled and destitute townships between Perth and Kingston—townships in which even yet there is hardly a settled minister, and in which mission tours are still most laborious. Fired with true missionary spirit, Mr. Whiting resolved to come and labour there as a volunteer missionary, and labour he did, grudging neither privation nor hard work, without fee or reward even in praise or thanks, except indeed the grateful love of the poor country people to whose spiritual needs he so acceptably ministered. He would walk long distances on foot as many of our Home Missionaries have to do, carrying at his belt a hatchet wherewith to force his way through the pathless woods; would live on the scant and poor fare which was all his friends could supply, returning summer after summer to go through the same laborious routine. At last, his theological studies being completed, he determined to go as a missionary to China, having already shewn by his Home Mission work that he was a labourer of the right sort. His Canadian friends grieved much to lose him, and still cherish the memory of his unsparing labours. Last winter a paragraph in the newspapers announced the death of the Rev. Albert Whiting, in China, from privations endured during the famine. It was further stated that the Governor of the Province in which he died, desired to have divine honours paid to his memory, and when that could not be permitted, insisted on defraying the expense of such a funeral as he deemed a fitting mark of respect for one who had given his life, like his Master, for those sitting in "darkness and the shadow of death." Were there more of such men among those who profess and call themselves Christians there would be fewer who glory in rejecting Christianity altogether. A. M. M.

FORMOSA.

PAPER READ BEFORE THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH—WESTERN SECTION AT HAMILTON, 13TH APRIL, 1880, BY MRS. J. THORNBURN, OTTAWA.

There is among the Germans this proverb: "Behind the mountains there are people." Our views are so apt to be bounded by our knowledge, and our sympathies so apt to be hedged in by our affections that it is very easy for us to forget what lies beyond. And it is well for us to be reminded that we of this nation—we of the Anglo-Saxon race—yea, we of Christendom are not the *whole* world, but that "behind the mountains there are people."

Perhaps, till within the last ten years, not one amongst here realized that in the far off-island of Formosa there lived 3,000,000 souls, ignorant of that Gospel which we so highly prize, and although there is now no spot among the islands of the eastern seas to which the hearts of the people of the Western Section of our Church so often turn as to Formosa, and al-

though we have learned much of the place and its people, still it seems desirable, in order to an intelligent idea of our Mission there, that we should have the geography and physical features of the island clearly in our minds, and for that purpose I have obtained a map—kindly lent by Professor McLaren—and have gleaned such facts regarding the place, its history and its missions as the sources of information at my disposal afforded.

THE ISLAND OF FORMOSA

is about the size of Nova Scotia, being 90 miles east of China, between 22° and 25° north latitude. Its length is nearly 250 miles, with an average width of 60 miles. Although so near to the mainland it does not appear to have been known to the Chinese till the year A.D. 1430, when an officer of the Imperial court, being wrecked on its shore, brought home tidings of the place. After this it was chiefly a resort for pirates who at that time infested the Chinese seas. Early in the sixteenth century it began to be known to the Spanish and Portuguese navigators. Albuquerque, the great Portuguese Viceroy, made his nation master of the Indian Seas. After him, in 1517, Perez de Andrada reached Canton and established the first trading relations with China, and it was probably in some of their voyages from Canton to Japan that this island was first visited by them. Struck with its beauty, the Portuguese called it "Isla Formosa," or the "Beautiful Island." After this the Spaniards probably made some attempts at establishing settlements and missions,* but it was not till the beginning of the seventeenth century that Europeans, in the persons of the doughty Hollanders, gained any strong footing on this island. The Dutch, lately emancipated from the Spanish yoke, were fast gaining ground on the Portuguese in the East Indies, and having captured Malacca and the Spice Islands, proceeded to attack the Portuguese settlement at Macao. Repulsed from this, they established themselves in the Pescadores—small islands between Formosa and the mainland. Here they became a source of great annoyance to the Chinese who, desirous of getting rid of such troublesome neighbours, offered them liberty to trade if they would remove farther off to Formosa, or "Taiwan," as it was called by the Chinese. Another account says that a vessel stopped at this island "which appeared charming to the Dutch, and commodious for trade, wherefore, under the pretence of staying for provisions and other necessaries, they took the opportunity to examine the island" (Da Haldi), and on their return reported its excellent facilities for trade. However this may be, in this island

THE DUTCH MADE A SETTLEMENT

in 1624, and as was their custom "erected, for the protection of their colony, a square fort with large bastions, and below these, towards the sea, they had another fortification, which covered the palace of their governor, consisting of two regular bastions, an excellent covered way and four half moons." The larger fort was called Fort Zeelandia, the smaller Fort Provincia, and near the spot now stands the city of Taiwan-foo. They also erected factories at Tamsui and Kelung.

When the Dutch first arrived the island must have been principally, if not altogether, occupied by the aborigines, but on the expulsion of the native Ting dynasty in 1652, and the placing of the Tartar race on the throne of China, many of the refugee loyalists flocked to Formosa from the mainland—an emigration which eventually proved fatal to the Dutch rule.

No sooner were the Dutch fairly established in Formosa than they turned their attention to the moral and spiritual condition of the natives. In 1626

GEORGE CANDIDIUS,

"minister of the Word of God," was sent to establish schools and missions among the people, and so successful was he in his labours that in sixteen months he is said to have converted to Christianity one hundred of their leading men. "In 1631, Mr. Robert Junius, of Delft, was sent by the United Provinces of Holland as a missionary. He is said to have baptized 5,900 converts on professing their faith and giving proper answers to questions propounded out of the Word of God, and to have planted twenty-three churches, besides appointing schoolmasters, by whom about six hundred children were taught. He is said also to have composed certain prayers, collected the chief articles of religion, and translated various

* The Japanese had also turned their attention to it.