

FIFTY YEARS AGO.

At a wharf in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the 30th of November, 1846 (—just fifty years ago.), a small vessel lies ready for sea.

A quiet-looking little man and his wife and two children come down the wharf and go on board.

Many of the people of the city and some from elsewhere are there to see them off.

Good-byes are said. The moorings are cast off. The sails are shaken out, and gently fill. The little craft moves off from the shore, out into the stream, and glides quietly down the Harbor.

The little groups of lingering watchers move slowly away, and the voyagers bid the sinking hills of their loved home land farewell.

Who are these, and where, and for what, are they going? They are our first Foreign Missionaries, Rev. John Geddie and his wife, setting forth on their long, long voyage to the South Seas.

To what Islands they shall go, they know not. All they know is that they are going to the heathen who never heard the Gospel, and who are living in cruel, naked savagery, without God and without hope; and that they are going to carry to these people the Saviour's message of love and peace, to make good and glad their lives here, and to give them hope for the future.

In their little vessel they go to Boston. There they get passage on a ship that is going on a whaling trip to the Pacific Ocean, and after a voyage in her, of 170 days around Cape Horn, they reach the Sandwich Islands.

After a time, a vessel passes there in which they get a passage to the Samoan Islands, which they reach after 28 days of tossing on the deep.

They remain for a little time with some missionaries who are there, learning about mission work and about the different groups of Islands, and decide to go to the New Hebrides.

At length they get a place in a passing ship, which will carry them there; and on the 29th of July, 1848, a year and eight months after sailing from Halifax, they land on Aneityum, among savage cannibals.

Twenty years afterwards that same little man and his wife came back on a visit to Canada, and could tell of the whole Island having cast away its idols; and when, some years later, in failing health, he went to Australia, soon to pass to his heavenly home, Aneityum was a Christian island; and in large letters, in the Church which he built, was put up the inscription "when he came there were no Christians; when he went away there were no heathen."

Mrs. Geddie, now very aged, still lives in Australia;—a noble woman, one of our first missionaries.

What changes have come in fifty years! Changes in two ways.

First, there have been great changes in the New Hebrides.

Other missionaries, from our own Church and from other churches, followed Mr. and Mrs. Geddie, until to-day our Church has three missionaries and their wives there, viz., the Annands at Santo, the Mackenzie's on Efate, and the Robertson's on Erromanga.

In all the group, there are some eighteen mission families, and nearly every island has missionary work done upon it.

There are a great many natives too, doing mission work,—about 130, and there is a College for training men to be teachers and preachers. At this College there are now twenty-eight boys or young men, the most of them with their wives.

What a change too in the Foreign Mission work which our Church is doing!

Then we had one mission family. Now we have three mission families in the New Hebrides; five in Trinidad; two in Formosa; eleven in Central India; five, besides five unmarried men, in Honan, China; and one unmarried man in Demarara.