

arrival of the mail sufficed for the wants of the inhabitants. One of the youths was the son of a pious woman who had devoted him from his infancy to the service of God, as a missionary. His name was Samuel J. Mills. One of his companions was Adoniram Judson. The five lads talked of Asia, and its moral darkness. Mills proposed that they should send the gospel to Asia, and added, that they "could do it if they would." In these obscure and seemingly unimportant circumstances, occurring among nameless youths, in regions unknown and little else than desert, we have the origin of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, now one of the greatest, most earnest, and most honoured of our organizations for sending the gospel to the heathen. The Christian mind of America was then opening, as that of Britain had begun a little earlier to open, to a sense of obligation in regard to the dark places of the earth. Several of our missionary societies began their course during the closing years of last century. A copy of the sermons delivered at the formation of the London Society was sent out to America—read with avidity—reprinted, and widely circulated. The seed dropped by Mills fell on ground prepared for its reception by agencies such as this, and the noble missionary effort of American Christians are its goodly fruits.

Missionary enterprise is entered upon in obedience to the Redeemer's command, and in faith that his blessing shall give it success. No human undertaking has better or surer ground to rest upon. But we have now something additional to faith—we have experience. Missionary effort has been increasing for now a full half century. We are able to see how far faith has been justified by results. One of two things must have happened. Either missions have, as it was trusted, turned many to righteousness, and given us a visible success which even unbelievers can no longer gainsay. Or it has been all the while merely a sowing of seed, and there is, as yet, nothing for us but to sow on in hope—hope so sure that even half a century of delay and disappointment may not be suffered to dash it. The experience of the American, as of other missions, exhibits a wondrous measure of faith on the part of the Church and of fulfilment on the part of her Head.

It is more the practice with the American Churches than it has ever been with ourselves to entrust to a distinct organization the entire administration of the missionary enterprise. Churches, as such, have frequently no missions. A board composed of members of several churches receives and expends the offerings which the members of these churches make to the missionary cause. The American Board of Commis-

sioners for Foreign Missions is the organ by which the missionary zeal of the Congregational and New School Presbyterian Churches expresses itself. Although inferior in extent to some of the great English societies, its operations have been for many years upon a nobly liberal scale. Its annual revenue has reached £90,000. During its career one million and three quarters sterling have been expended. Four hundred and forty-one ordained missionaries have been sent forth, and eight hundred and seventy unordained. Thirty-nine distinct missions have been established, embracing two hundred and sixty-nine stations and out-stations. Four hundred and fifty-eight native preachers are employed. Rising out of these stations one hundred and forty-nine churches have been formed, into which have been gathered fifty-five thousand members. Ten thousand children are now in attendance upon the three hundred and sixty-nine schools of the Board. The missionaries of the Board have spoken the word of life in forty-two foreign languages, twenty of which had to be reduced to writing by themselves before it was possible that the savages who used them could be taught to read.

The annals of the American Board present us with successes which if not actually greater are, at least, more striking than most of our other missionary triumphs. The Board was led, at an early period to bestow a good deal of attention upon the North American Indians, and the inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands. The results of their labours in these fields are very marvellous. We have no missionary success more rapid or more complete. It is true that success is more visible in a small community than in a large. A measure of success which would be scarcely perceptible among the millions of India would suffice completely to Christianize a small community. So it has happened in the Sandwich Islands. We cannot help regarding these little communities as so many models, illustrative of the working and the results of Christian missions graciously exhibited by the head of the Church, for the encouragement of his people. In twenty years the Sandwich Islands passed from death to life—from sensuality indescribable, from degradation almost beyond belief, to the enjoyment of all those untold blessings—social, economical, spiritual, which follow in the train of Christianity. It was in 1820 that the American missionaries first landed on the islands. Humanity has scarcely ever fallen lower than to the level of the Sandwich Islanders. For some years the missionaries laboured in hope, translated the Bible into a language hitherto unwritten, and otherwise laid solidly the foundation of their great work. In 1834 their