

SYNOD OF NEW-JERSEY.

November Simultaneous Meetings

1887.

“IF HAPLY THEY MIGHT FEEL
AFTER HIM.”

“I AM DYING, I AM MISERABLE! YOU HAVE KEPT ME FROM THE LIGHT, AND NOW I DO NOT SEE WHICH WAY I AM GOING! YOUR WAY IS ALL DARKNESS, I CANNOT GO IN IT. YOU HAVE LED ME THE WRONG WAY! YOU ARE ALL BLIND, I DO NOT WANT YOU ANY LONGER!”

“Thus,” says the Rev. Robert Phair, (English) Church Missionary Society’s missionary in Rupert’s Land, from Lake Winnipeg to Lake Superior, “spoke a young Indian, of the Rainy-River tribe. He was of considerable promise, and much liked by all the Indians. A little before he died, when surrounded by a large band of singers and the whole Indian faculty of medicine, who had exhausted their arts in the vain effort to restore him to health; he had asked to be heard, and, gathering all his strength, had uttered those words.” How significant are they of *the universal condition of men under Heathen religions!*

I read this story (with others added herewith) from the C. M. S. tract: “Come Over and Help Us—The Cry of the Heathen—” among a company of missionaries gathered from many lands at Thousand-Islands-Park in the River Saint-Lawrence last August (1887); and I asked if any of them had ever known any instances, such as it reports, of *Heathen themselves expressing a desire for the Gospel.*

There was a stir among them, as though many would rise; the first to speak was the Rev. E. R. Young, lately a missionary of the Canada Methodist Church. He spoke from an experience among the Indians in the same part of the world with the one just mentioned, having had his base at Norway-House, 400 miles north of Winnipeg, and on the lake of that name; in a frozen region where, alone except for his wife, he has served a circuit 350 by 550 miles at a temperature falling as low as 55° below zero. Mr. Young said (I give the words as I could note them down from the mouths of speakers): "I can indorse Mr. Phair's story, whose work was near and familiar to me, as the utterance of hundreds of Indians. At Norway-House, on a certain occasion, a number of Indians came into my room, noiselessly, after their fashion, so that the room was filled with them before I knew it. When I became aware of their presence, I asked whence they were. 'From a journey of fourteen nights,' they replied; for they reckon distance by the number of nights they are delayed to sleep. 'We have got the *Keesenaychen* [the Great Book], but we don't understand it, although we can read it.' I thought they were joking, for the Indians cannot read, unless some one has taught them, and I knew from their account that they must live far away from any missionary; but I asked them: 'From what missionary did you learn?' 'We never saw a missionary nor a teacher!' I took down from my shelf our Bible, printed in the beautiful syllabic character for the Cree language, and opened to Genesis; they read it with ease and correctness. I turned the pages and they read in many places. I was amazed, and asked them again where they lived. They described it to me; it was far away, north of Hudson's Bay, hundreds of miles from any missionary. Their hunting-grounds, it seems, adjoin those of some Christian Indians—they cover great distances in hunting—and, continued my visitors: 'We visited your Indians, and found that they had the *Keesenaychen*. We got them to read it, and then to teach it to us; and we were so pleased with it that we all learned to read it, during the winter.' *Every soul in a village of three hundred population had thus actually learned to read the Bible without ever having seen any white teacher*; and having Providentially come into possession of some copies that happened to be in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company's agent, *these heathen Indians had journeyed through the snows fourteen nights' distance, that to them might be given instruction in the Book they had thus learned to love.*"

Another instance which I read from the C. M. S. tract to the missionaries, was this:

The Rev. Ruttonjee Nowrojee, of Aurungabad, in central India, was preaching in 1882 at a town called Paitan, on the river Godavery, during one of the immensely attended native fairs. He wrote home: "In the great gathering of this celebrated town, where we have preached twelve hours daily and been heard, as I calculated, by at least 10,000 or 12,000 people, I have noticed a strange desire to know our religion. There is an increasing restlessness, on the part of the masses, and often have I heard them exclaim: '*Oh, do show us the way of salvation. Show us the inner mysteries of your religion. We are far from being happy. We want peace.*'"

Our religions do not satisfy us. Can your religion give what ours cannot? I will mention one instance. A Brahmin, employed as schoolmaster, visited us daily. At the time of parting he put up both his hands—joining them together (which Brahmins never do, except only to Brahmins)—and with moistened eyes he told me, in the presence of a large audience: 'Oh sir, how grateful I am for the trouble you have taken in solving my difficulties, and how much I feel refreshed and comforted. Oh sir, let me make one request. In all your preaching, and at the conclusion of every discourse, call upon my countrymen to learn to read. When they read your Scriptures they will be convinced that Christianity is divine, revealing to sinners God's plan of salvation.' Others [adds Mr. Nowrojee in 1885] when asked to go and worship at the shrine of Eknath, have told their friends, within our hearing: '*Leave us alone. What can the tomb of a dead man do for us? We have nothing but dead silence in that shrine; none to speak to us; none to comfort us. Let us hear the Christian preachers. Their message speaks peace to our souls.*'"

In corroboration of these testimonies, but from a different field, Dr. Cyrus Hamlin, founder and first president of Robert-college, Constantinople, Turkey, arose and said:

"There is certainly a suppressed demand for the Gospel among Mahammadans in the Turkish empire. They do not hate Christ; they honor Him; it is Christianity that they hate, from the false examples of it seen around them in the corrupt Oriental churches. Among the great Mahammadan population in the three empires of Turkey, Persia and India (150,000,000 to 200,000,000 of souls) *there is a suppressed demand for the word of God and for freedom to hear of Christ.* Years ago, before the founding of the present Mission (American Board's) to the Bulgarians, I was in Philippopolis (350 miles west of Constantinople), now the capital of Eastern-Roumelia, or as it is just now called, Southern-Bulgaria. A military man called upon me, who I at once saw belonged to the Slavic race, of which the Bulgarians are a part. I said to him, 'You are not a Turk?' 'No,' said he, 'I am a Slav [Slahv]; but I am a captain in the Turkish army. I want to ask you when England is going to give us liberty . . . ? Because if there was any freedom I should become a Christian; and here in these provinces (European Turkey) *out of our 4,000,000 Mahammadans, one-fourth would embrace Christianity!*' I replied: 'What are your reasons for such an opinion?' He said: 'Don't you know that there are a great many of us who are not really Turks at all? And to this day when a Mahammadan father has a son born to him, it often happens that he takes him into a dark room and puts water on him and says certain words——*that is a remnant of Christianity.* A Turk will never do that! *And I said to my colonel: I wish there was liberty to profess Christianity!* 'Tush,' said my colonel, 'don't say that, for I feel just so, and you know what the consequences would be.' I believe [continued Dr. Hamlin] that England has abandoned religious liberty in Turkey, because she has 50,000,000 of Mahammadans over in India, and she fears them more than she fears God. There are 4,000 to 5,000 New-Testaments in Turkish

and Armenian sold now every year in Turkey, and that means 20,000 readers."

(Strikingly corroborative of these statements, though apart from the tract and its commentators of the International Missionary Union, is a passage in a letter which I have just received from one of our own Presbyterian missionaries who says: "Such cases [as in the tract] have occurred, of Mahammadans seeking light and avowing an interest in Christianity, but they are few. If only religious liberty were granted, we doubt not that the Macedonian cry would ring from many lips now sealed by fear. Those coming to us on such an errand, trust to us not to reveal anything concerning them, as such revelations would draw certain ruin upon their heads.—An Englishman who has been traveling stated in a recent visit that a Moslem whom he met in his travels avowed himself a Christian. He said that his conversion was due to the fact that while living in he found one day in a mosque a copy of the Bible. He read in it, was greatly interested, and finally was convinced by it that Christianity was the only true faith. Then he showed the book to the Imaum of the mosque, and told him his views. This man was greatly displeased and took away the book. The convert fled to There he received one day a letter from the Imaum, saying that he was near to death, that he had read the Bible and thought that perhaps, after all, it was true, and Christ was the one Prophet of God and Savior."

Another remarkably parallel instance to these comes in our N. S. M. correspondence from the Rev. T. C. Winn, of Kanazawa, Japan, where the attitude of the Government is quite the reverse of that in Turkey. He says: "On a visit to the city of Tayama, in 1881, we were visited by an old gentleman in our hotel, who said: 'I have long held an important position in one of the temples here; but *I have lost faith in the religions of Japan. I am an old man and must soon die. But my religion gives me no hope for the future. I find no consolation in it. For some time I have been thinking that there must be some other and true religion. From what you have said I believe that you have at last brought it to me. Please teach me all about this true religion.*' This man became a Christian."

Of the same country; while another correspondent, the Rev. A. V. Bryan, now of Heerosheema, says "it is quite evident to me that *this people do not from a sense of sin come to Christ as the Savior from sin;*" yet adds: "yet with all these sinister motives for desiring the presence and help of missionaries, we have in Japan a much broader door open to us that we may enter in and possess this land." How broad that door is, may be perceived from another N. S. M. letter. The Rev. J. B. Porter, of Kanazawa, writes to me just now:

"*It has become so common in this part of Japan, for Heathen to make known voluntarily their own desire to have the Gospel brought to them or their people, that at this Station we have adopted the following for our 'outstation' work: 'Whereas the invitations are so numerous from towns and villages to give them the Gospel, and preachers are so scarce, resolved*

that we as far as possible open new preaching stations only at those towns or villages where people have expressed a desire to have us do so; and that we call upon those persons who send the invitations to be responsible for at least the expense of the preaching place from the beginning.'"

Voluntary invitations numerous from Heathen that the Gospel be brought to them—and yet "preachers scarce!" "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He may send forth laborers into His harvest!" These also are words from a Missionary, even from Him Who "saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor."

In sympathy also with these letters, the Rev. Dr. Hunter Corbett writes me from Chefoo, China; both that: "Our hearts are constantly made sad by *the supreme indifference of the masses to the claims of the Gospel;*" and also that: "*Occasionally the clouds lift, and light appears to cheer our weak faith.* A man from a certain district in Manchuria, where the United-Presbyterians of Scotland are engaged, went to a missionary physician for his eyes. He received some benefit, but his great gain was to his soul. A deep impression was made on him by the worship and the kindness in the hospital. After he returned to his home, he went about from village to village telling what he had learned and pleading with all to accept Christ as their Savior. Many scoffed, but some believed, and these *sent a request to the missionaries to send some one to teach them more fully.* A teacher was sent, and the missionary subsequently baptized thirty inquirers."

Miss Mary L. Cort, of our Presbyterian Mission in Siam, author of "Siam the Heart of Farther India," writes me: "In April last while making a mission tour to Ratburee, I met an old nobleman from Kanburee, a large city fifty miles further up the river, who *begged us to visit his city, for, he said, he had never before heard of a 'living' God and of forgiveness of sin!*" Miss Cort also refers to the recent remarkable gifts of the king and queen of Siam to our Mission for their benevolent work, reported some months since in the weekly papers.)

(To return to our missionaries at the Thousand-Islands): Another response came from the Rev. J. L. Phillips, M.D., D.D., at present acting as chaplain of State institutions at Howard, R. I., while waiting to return to his (Free Baptist) Mission in India. He said: "A little mission-station two miles from us had, almost every week, companies of men coming in from the jungle, some of them traveling many miles to reach a native evangelist. Among the Santhals around me, one day a native helper came to say: 'A man out here has just asked me: Are there any Christians here? for I have seen a black Christian, and a neighbor of mine once saw a white one; *tell your Christians that there are some of us who want Christianity.*' So we went away to where this stranger lived. An old man came and prostrated himself on the grass before us. He brought out a little book printed by the English Baptists at Cuttack, Orissa [India]. It was not even a chapter of the Bible; it was some Scripture truth metrically written, and these people had been singing it with their lips not only, but with their hearts. 'A man,' said one of them, 'went to a

Sunday market and would not let some whites who were there preach ; but they left some books. One day I heard my neighbor reading in one of these and I asked him, as I found he cared nothing for it, to give it to me ; and I brought it home. I believed it, and my wife ; the priest and his wife, and my son and his wife.' So [continued Dr. Phillips] we found eight souls, now ready for whatever Christianity should require of them."

Two more C. M. S. incidents, the first from their magazine, the "Intelligencer," August, 1887. "A fakkeer from the Panjab but living in the Meerat district, in India, came recently to the Rev. Rowland Bateman at Kangra. *He had spent all his life in a search after God.* Marrying young, he at first left his child-wife at home and started out to search the world over. He went to all the sacred places of pilgrimage known to him, and pursued, by prayer, austerity, and the companionship of devotees, his wonderful quest. He not unfrequently came across missionaries, but never listened to their preaching, as he was convinced that they had no knowledge of God themselves. At the end of about eighteen years he returned in despair to his home. His wife, now grown-up, begged him to renew his search and to take her with him. So they traveled together for seven years; two sons were born to them; but nowhere did they find more than dumb idols and greedy Brahmins. At last they heard of a sacred fountain near Kangra, where the purest water bursts unaided from the mountain-side, and where neither Brahmins nor idols should mock their hopes. The water proved all that they could have desired, but it could not refresh their souls. Their pony was killed by falling from a cliff, and their cooking-vessels stolen on the sacred spot itself while they were engaged in worship. The police recovered, but detained, their vessels; and the man determined to leave them and depart. When about a mile away, a Brahmin learned in astrology persuaded him to return. Being now without money or food as well as without his lost property, he was indeed in a sad case. Thus reduced, he gave heed to news of a good Englishman who, it was reported, gave coppers to the poor on Sundays. He went, and there, at last, he heard, and heeded, the good tidings of a crucified Saviour. The scales fell from his eyes. He brought his wife to hear. The word of God was made known to them; and he was baptized, rejoicing in the Lord with all his house. He is now working with Mr. Bateman, and his wife and children are under Miss Tucker's wing at Batala."

Strikingly similar to this story in the magazine was another related to us by Dr. Hamlin of Robert-college: "Two Armenians living in the far interior of the Turkish dominions in Asia, belonging to the nominally Christian but deeply corrupt 'Old Armenian Catholic' Church, heard that there was a college for the study of the Christian religion at Constantinople [Dr. Hamlin's own theological seminary at Bebek in that city, now transferred to Marsovan]. They were dissatisfied with the religion of their priests, and so, welcoming the intelligence, they undertook, and safely accomplished, the long, toilsome, and perilous journey to the Turkish capital. Arrived in Constantinople, they naturally and without a sus-

picion of the consequences, sought out the head of their Church, the Armenian Patriarch, and made known their desires. Alas! they had fallen into the wrong hands. The Patriarch was no friend of evangelical Christianity; and with subtle courtesy he professed sympathy with them and lamented that their journey had been in vain, as no such school existed. He would direct them, however, whither their trials should be at an end. . . . After more tedious journeyings, they discovered the deception; and with saddened but still resolute hearts, commenced anew *their quest for God.* They became separated. One wandered to Jerusalem. But strange Providences wrought to bring the one, ultimately, to that very seminary from which his unconscious feet had been turned away. While he was yet living there, lo! one day the voice of his long-missing companion sounded through the courtyard. They embraced each other with the deepest affection; they had found one another, and, far better, they had both found and rejoiced in Christ."

(The N. S. M. correspondence brings the following from Dr. J. L. Nevius of Chefoo, China (of our own Church), just as these incidents are going finally to the printer :

"In the spring of 1885, while itinerating in a region about 260 miles from here, previously unvisited, I was by providential circumstances drawn aside from the road I was traveling, and a person whom I should not have met in the proposed course of my journey, was providentially drawn from his home to meet me. While the crowds with whom I met in the market-town where I was stopping sought me out and listened to me from mere curiosity, this man listened with intense interest to all I said. After listening for some time he introduced himself and addressed me as follows: '*This is what I have been waiting for, for twenty years. I have been earnestly seeking for light and guidance, but without success. This is the very truth I want!*' This man—his name is Yang-yiu-shin—received and embraced the truth at once, as a person prepared and called. He has been an earnest and successful student of the Bible ever since, and he has been God's instrument in establishing three churches in and about his home. I have met with no similar case in my experience."

One more, and there must be an end. This also I read from the C. M. S. tract, and it was to this, as to the words of a well-known neighbor and to the frequency of such facts, that Mr. Young first arose to his feet, as related in the first instance :

"One who had been a heathen red man," says Bishop Whipple of the American Episcopalians, whose missionary labors in the diocese of Minnesota have made him illustrious on both sides the Atlantic, "came 600 miles to visit me. As he came into the door he knelt at my feet, saying: 'I kneel to tell you of my gratitude that you pitied the red man.' He then told this simple, artless story: 'I was a wild man living beyond the Turtle Mountain. I knew that my people were perishing; I never looked in the face of my child that my heart was not sick. My fathers told me there was a Great Spirit, and *I have often*

gone to the woods and tried to ask Him for help, and I only got the sound of my voice.' And then he looked in my face in that artless way and said, 'You do not know what I mean. You never stood in the dark and reached out your hand, and took hold of nothing. One day an Indian came to my wigwam. He said to me he had heard you tell a wonderful story at Red Lake; that you said the Great Spirit's Son had come down to earth to save all the people that needed help; that the reason that the white man was so much more blessed than the red man, was because he had the true religion of the Son of the Great Spirit; and I said I must see that man. They told me you would be at the Red Lake crossing. I came 200 miles. I asked for you, and they said you were sick, and then I said, 'Where can I see a Missionary?' I came 150 miles more, and I found the Missionary was a red man like myself. My father, I have been with him three moons. I have the story in my heart. *It is no longer dark. It laughs all the while.*' And he turned to me and said, 'Will you not give me a Missionary?' Shame on the Church that I had to say to him, 'We have not the man, and we have not the means'!"

Not all those who have not the Gospel, do thus "feel after" it "and find Him who is not far from every one." Perhaps, as some think, it is only those to whom the messenger is already on the way, who beseech their Phillips "to come up and sit with them." But some there are who cry out voluntarily for a Saviour; let us thank God for these, and speak of them freely to one another in this day when our mouths may not be silent.

W. H. B.

This is the promised "missionary material for Laymen only." It is not to go into any other hands until after our Simultaneous Week. The object is to assure those of the Laity who may be looked to where speakers are scarce of well-authenticated facts known to them or by which they can read, repeat, or select from.