

P.

As. Acc.

[From "The Chinese Recorder," July, 1913.]

509 20642



The Advice of a Veteran to Missionaries on Furlough

REV. HUNTER CORBETT, D.D.

IN May 1875 it was my great privilege to spend an hour in company with President Charles Finney at his home in Oberlin, Ohio. He began the conversation by saying: "I went to church yesterday expecting to hear a returned missionary tell of the Lord's doings in the land where he had spent twelve years of his life. Judge of my disappointment to hear the missionary preach, in rather a lame way, a sermon that he had probably written while yet a student before going to the mission field. In the audience were not only many Christians of mature years and in middle life but also several hundred young men and women engaged in College study eager to hear what would give them a broader outlook and inspire them with high and noble thoughts.

After having lived among a strange people and having seen souls brought into the light and fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ he could surely have spoken with a power greater than those who had not enjoyed his advantages, and given us a message that would have helped true Christians to get a more exalted idea of the power and glory of their unseen Saviour and a truer idea of the imperative need of all those living 'without hope and without God.' A message that would have constrained us when we returned to our homes to fall upon our knees to thank God anew for a knowledge of the unspeakable gift of eternal life, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to pray more earnestly for all who do not enjoy our hope and blessings."

I finally said that the missionary he had heard had been a fellow-student and friend of mine in College and was reported to have made a fine record on the mission field. "All the greater reason why he should have told us something of the Lord's work and the need as he had seen it."

All I could say was my friend like myself had started for the mission field immediately after leaving the seminary and had enjoyed no opportunity of becoming acquainted with pastors and churches in the homeland and learning the best methods of

presenting the cause of missions. Besides, years spent in the study of a strange language and very few opportunities of speaking in English increased the difficulty. When returning on furlough, as yet untried and inexperienced, I felt sure that every young missionary would rejoice to have the privilege of learning from secretaries and pastors and teachers of experience in the home field, how to begin and continue, and I asked what advice he would give to a young missionary.

After an interval of nearly forty years I can only distinctly remember the impression made and not the language used.

He spoke somewhat as follows :—

I. "Good sermons cannot be preached without time for study, prayer and meditation. The missionary should make careful and ample preparation for presenting the cause of missions in the most effective and telling manner possible. Group facts briefly, and clearly state them in the most forcible and best language and give them so abundantly and earnestly as to compel attention and leave the hearer no time for speculation or wandering thoughts. Study the lesson taught by Paul and Barnabas who when they returned and had gathered the Church together rehearsed all that God had done with them and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

II. Leave it to the ministers and pastors of the churches to show the missionary character of the New Testament dispensation. Let them in their own way urge the duty of every one who has received the truth to communicate it in some way to others and show that it is the duty and privilege of all to help by their prayers, influence, money, and time to obey the command to preach the Gospel to every creature.

III. Adopt the language of thanksgiving and unwavering hope in the power of the Gospel to save men. Avoid pouring forth complaints and discouragements because of difficulties of whatever nature; some argue that the number of converts is not commensurate with the time, the money and strength used both at home and on the mission field. Strive more earnestly to show the power of the Gospel in producing happy Christian homes, changed lives and triumphant Christian deaths.

Do not fail to learn in advance how much time the pastor ordinarily gives to the sermon and go not a minute beyond. Leave the people eager to hear more rather than wish the speaker to stop.

Stop suddenly when the time is up and leave it to the pastor at another time to show to his people all the things which Christ hath commanded and to lead them into green pastures and beside the still waters.”

The duty, responsibility, and privilege of the missionary while at home on furlough were portrayed so vividly as to startle one and give an enlarged view of the honor of having been called to this office—and the great necessity of learning under the Divine Teacher more of the Gospel and the power to present the cause of missions so as to awaken all to realize the necessity of a more intelligent and growing interest leading to more earnest prayer and greater liberality.

President Finney became so deeply interested himself as he spoke of how the mission work should grip every Christian heart that he paced the floor and seemed to have all the fluency and earnestness of his younger days when addressing crowded houses. He was a man of tall figure, had keen blue eyes, a noble head, a strong, clear and musical voice. He was endowed with rare gifts and deep consecration, whose labors as a revival preacher and an educator God signally blessed. About three months after I met him at the age of 83 he was called to the heavenly home.
