

A

DISCOURSE

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DISCOURSE.

“ He being dead, yet speaketh.”—Hebrews xi. 4.

THUS testifies the apostle in respect to the first human being that ever descended into the dark valley. Though he had been dead nearly forty centuries, and though the fact of his being dead is here distinctly recognized, he is nevertheless referred to as if he were still alive, addressing himself to the intelligence and the feelings of living men. The expression no doubt embodies the grand idea of the immortality of human influence. Man bows to the destroyer—his earthly house of this tabernacle goes to ruin ; and his spirit flies off to a new and distant home. And yet there is a sense, even in respect to his earthly existence, in which he is an overmatch for the grave. He survives in not only the record, but the influence of the past. His actions, his aspirations, his purposes, his thoughts,—all the varied workings of his intellectual and moral nature, are perpetuated as the faithful representative of his spirit, here on earth. True, they may exist in such forms and combinations, as to elude our utmost scrutiny ; and we may forget, amidst the movements of the living world, that the dead have yet anything to do upon earth ; but herein we yield to an illusion that dishonors our intellectual nature—the dead are still among us, though we see them not ; they speak, though we hear them not ; they mould our judgments ; they quicken our desires ; they live in our prejudices ; they help to form our characters for time and eternity ; and that, when perhaps the fact of their having lived is not in all our thoughts.

This general truth acquires a peculiar interest, when applied particularly to men who have been eminent for their faith and piety ; as was Abel. The idea that the existence of bad men,

such as Cain for instance, is perpetuated on earth, is revolting and terrible, though it certainly is not without some important uses ; but that a good man should have his life continued in other lives,—that he does nothing for his generation but what he does equally for the generations that come after him—this surely is a thought which invests a life of virtue with some of its highest attractions. Let me not be weary in well doing, if the seeds of righteousness which I am scattering here, are to yield a perpetual harvest.

But I design in the present discourse to give to this truth a still more specific application ;—an application suggested immediately by the occasion that has convened us. We send off our missionaries to distant lands, and after a few years of faithful labor,—perhaps within a much shorter period,—we have to record what seems to us their premature departure. The design of this discourse is to bring these dispensations into the light of Bible truth ; to show you that these men, though dead, still speak ; in other words, it is to illustrate the **POSTHUMOUS INFLUENCE OF FOREIGN MISSIONARIES.**

Let us survey the field on which this influence operates ; inquire for the secret of its power ; and anticipate the grandeur of its results.

I. Look over the field, so far as it may come within the range of your vision, on which the influence of our departed missionaries still operates.

No doubt this influence must be primarily felt on the spot where their labors have been immediately performed. Here are they who remember the man of God, when he first came among them with the words of eternal life upon his lips. They remember the kindness with which he approached them ; the untiring zeal with which he followed them ; how he condescended to their weakness and their blindness ; how earnestly he set forth the claims of his message upon their understandings and hearts ; and finally, how they bowed to the power of his teachings, or rather to the higher power of God's Spirit operating through them, and received the gospel as a little child. It was through his instrumentality then that they were delivered, not merely from Pagan errors, but from the tyranny of a corrupt nature—that they became heirs of the grace of life ; joint heirs with Christ to the Heavenly inheritance. Nor is this all that they

remember of his labors in their behalf; for he helped them on their way, to the last; and, not improbably, even his dying breath was consecrated to their spiritual benefit. Now it cannot be but that these converts to the truth will become each a channel through which his good influence will flow around, and flow down to future generations. They have been prepared, through his instrumentality, not only for entering Heaven when they die, but for laboring to good purpose on earth before they die; and rely on it, his hand will be in all that they achieve; his spirit will live in their last song of praise, their last pulsation of joy; and his very mantle will be treasured as a sacred relic to testify concerning him to a remote posterity.

But the influence of the missionary survives him, even in those who have been merely the witnesses of his example; for many who would not open their ears to his evangelical teachings, have not been able to close their eyes upon his virtuous and benevolent doings. And when he is taken away, as they remember what he was, may not even the instincts of nature plead the cause of Christianity in their bosoms? May we not hope that there is something lodged in the memory, that will, by and by, open a channel of blessing to the heart? Who knoweth but that, in all this, there may be seed sown that shall bring forth fruit unto everlasting life!

Need I say that his influence will be powerfully felt by his fellow laborers also whom he leaves in the field? He has been united with them, perhaps for years, in the bonds, not only of Christian brotherhood, but of a common devotion to the interests of the Heathen. He has assisted them by his counsels; he has cheered them in despondency; he has shared with them the labor of organizing and putting into operation, institutions for the more effectual prosecution of the missionary work; he has joined his supplications with theirs to the God of providence and grace, for the removal of obstacles, for light to shine upon their path, and power to accompany their message; and finally, when difficulties have been unexpectedly removed; when a cloudy morning has proved the harbinger of a bright day; when the dry bones have begun to move under the breath from Heaven; his heart and voice have borne a full share in the common tribute of thanksgiving. And think you that, when his brethren have laid him in his last lowly dwelling place, and have gone away to

tell Jesus of their sorrows,—think you that they are doomed to the reflection that he is no longer in any sense among them ; that though his grave is by their side, yet all its utterances are mournful, as it speaks to them only of disappointed hopes ? Believe me, they are conscious of his encouraging, sustaining, quickening presence still. They take lessons of encouragement, not of despondency, from his new-made grave. As they contemplate the monuments of his beneficent activity, they repose in the joyful reflection that death has had no power to make him love the cause of missions less. The current of influence on the surrounding Heathen which he put in motion, they perceive keeps moving, and perhaps with a manifestly increasing power. A voice comes up from his grave, or rather it comes down from his throne, saying to them, “ Go forward, go forward in your self-denying work ; disdain perils ; frown upon obstacles ; exercise perfect trust ; that when ye come to rest from your labors, ye may share the honor of the Redeemer’s many crowns.” So long as those who have been his companions in labor stay this side of Heaven, so long will they walk in his light, so long will the remembrance of him be a source of comfort and strength ; and when the time comes for *them* to ascend, they will leave those who come after them more strong to labor, more strong to suffer, because of their own godly fellowship of labor and suffering with those who had passed before them into the Heavens.

But if the posthumous influence of the missionary is felt in its greatest intensity on the immediate field of his labors, it is felt also far beyond it—it is not easy to draw the line that shall mark the limit beyond which it may not extend. The missionary, though he may have spent the greater part of his life on Heathen ground, yet once had a home here in the midst of Christian society,—possibly in the bosom of one of your own families. But though he has gone abroad, and has staid long away, he is not forgotten—you have never ceased to be interested in his fortunes ; you have never ceased to remember him in your prayers ; you have never lost sight of him for a single year ; you are familiar with the history of his toils, and trials, and triumphs ; and when the tidings come that he has finished his course, you mourn the death, not merely of a friend, but of an efficient helper of Christ’s cause. And then you set yourself to thinking of what God has wrought through his instrumentality ; and

there comes to you, through the channel of these reflections, a fresh baptism of the missionary spirit; and under its influence you go forth, and pray the Lord of the harvest to bring in new laborers; and more than that, you act in consistency with your prayers. Is that departed missionary doing nothing for *you*; nothing through you, to evangelize the world? You indeed are a unit; but why should not a similar effect be produced upon others—indeed, why should not the death of one missionary be the occasion of an extensive revival of the spirit of missions, and thus be the means of bringing several laborers into the field, in place of the one who has departed? Nor is it merely in the circle, the community, even the country, in which that missionary has spent his early days, that his death becomes a matter of interest, or his life a matter of record, or his influence a thing of reality; wherever, throughout evangelical Christendom, it is known that such an one, especially if he have been distinguished for his faithfulness and his usefulness, has been summoned away, *there* will be communicated a fresh impulse in favor of giving the gospel to the nations. You include in dark lines the paragraph in your paper which announces that some standard-bearer in China, or Africa, or the far-off islands of the sea, has fallen; and yet that very paragraph brings ten thousands of hearts into more intimate communion with the God of missions; and perhaps, if you knew all, you might conclude your obituary by saying that, like Sampson of old, he had accomplished more by his death than by his life.

II. If such is the field on which the influence of the departed missionary operates, let us inquire, secondly, for the secret of its power.

I say then, in the first place, it has its origin in an intelligent Christian activity. It is not every kind of activity that tells either powerfully or benignly on the interests of human society. It is possible that an individual should be very active,—that is, should always seem to be occupied,—should always move as if he were in a hurry; and yet it should be difficult to find out much that he has done, either for good or evil—the reason is that, however unexceptionable his intentions may have been, his movements have not been guided by intelligence and discretion. Then again, it is possible that one should put forth great vigor of intellect, under the influence of the most corrupt propensities, and of

a slumbering or misguided conscience—in this case there may be decided effects produced, but unless God interpose to prevent they will only be for evil. But suppose the activity of an individual to combine the two elements—intelligence and sound Christian principle, and you have not only a good influence, but a powerful influence, secured; for while Christianity purifies the moral man, she also invigorates and exalts the intellectual. May I am sure that it is not too much to claim for our missionaries in general, that they are active men—that they are intelligent men—that they are decidedly Christian men; and if this be admitted, may we not reasonably expect that their labors will not be in vain? We see that they are not in vain; and if the wilderness begins to bud and blossom under their culture, while they are living, why should it not continue to unfold its life and beauty, after they are dead? In other words, if their well-directed Christian energy is a legitimate fountain of eminent usefulness, and we are actually able to trace its streams in one direction as well as another, while they remain upon earth, who can doubt that the streams will keep flowing, in spite of the mock triumph which death displays in respect to the body?

Again: This influence of which I speak emanates certainly from a conspicuous position,—possibly from a character of marked

There is much in a high position to aid one's influence. Such a position renders the person who occupies it an object of extensive observation. An individual who moves on the same level with the multitude, may be lost in the crowd—his voice is not heard at a distance—he may do one thing or another, and there shall be few to notice it, none to proclaim or record it. But if the self same individual be elevated to a throne, as many a person of moderate capacity has been, and the whole world are gazing after him, and his most insignificant actions are chronicled as if they were to decide a nation's destiny. An elevated station moreover, commands many facilities for acting powerfully upon the minds of others, unknown to an humbler station; it constitutes one the keeper of a great depository of influence which he may direct in one way or another at his pleasure. But suppose that to a prominent position there be added a position in which the rarest gifts of nature unite with the highest degree of culture, and say what such an individual, occupying such a post, may not be able to accomplish. History, observation,

plies you with many such cases; and there is not one of them, I venture to say, that is not associated in your mind with the idea of mighty power.

Now apply this representation to the case of the missionary. I claim that *he* occupies a lofty position—not indeed in the view of the world, but in the view of the church, in the view of angels, in the view of Him who sees all things just as they are. There is a sense, indeed, in which this is true of every Christian, and especially of every Christian minister; but I maintain that the missionary is distinguished, even among his brethren—I cannot doubt that there is many an ambassador of Christ to the Heathen, both among the living and the dead, whose name is like a household word in all our Christian circles, who, if he had staid at home, though he might still have been a faithful and useful minister, would have lived and died in comparative obscurity. Had David Brainard been simply the minister of a New England parish, I am not sure that he would have had any remarkable prominence at this day among the excellent ministers of his generation. But, as a missionary to the Indians, his name is known as familiarly, and I had almost said as extensively, as that of Paul. The reason of this prominence that the missionary gains, is obvious. He engages in a work full of difficulty and peril; and this draws many eyes upon him. He becomes an object of marked interest to the church, from the time that his consecration to this work is known; and she regards him as, in a peculiar sense, one of her own sons. In due time she clothes him with authority, and sends him forth; and the occasion of his departure fixes his name in the minds of multitudes. She waits anxiously for the tidings of his arrival; she watches his movements with a sort of parental concern; when God blesses his labors, her thanksgivings ascend; and finally, when God takes him away, her heart fills with unwonted sorrow. Is it not true then, that the foreign missionary occupies a much more conspicuous place than other ministers of the gospel—that his *example* at least must exert a far wider influence?

But it has happened, not very unfrequently, that these men who have gone to carry the gospel to the heathen, have been men of great intellectual power—men who might have signalized themselves at home in any capacity—whose shoulders were broad enough even to bear the heaviest burdens of state. What a

gifted being, for instance, was that youthful missionary, He Martin! How learned, how acute, how able to silence the orators of Paganism—how revered even by the greatest of his contemporaries! The venerable Morrison too—what stores of Oriental learning had he acquired and rendered fully available to the prosecution of the missionary work in all coming time! His assured, great mental powers and acquisitions never turn to their proper account anywhere than on the missionary field. We have seen ourselves had missionaries who have left their mark deep in the country where they were born and educated, as well as in the country where they labored and died. They thought, they spoke, they wrote, they acted, in a manner that fairly entitled them to be considered as lights in the intellectual world.

Here, then, we have, in some instances at least, the dominant influence of a commanding position and of high talent, during the missionary's life; and this is the very influence which is preserved and sent forward after his death. Such a man does not pass away, but there is some enduring monument erected to his honor. Perhaps he has made provision to perpetuate himself by his own writings. Perhaps some skilful hand has set its seal to the work of taking his intellectual and moral portrait; and perhaps may have brought forth a picture that all posterity will study and admire. There are a multitude of channels open to such a man's influence upon the future; and the aggregate must be vast beyond our conception.

It will help, still further, to account for the power of this influence, if we bear in mind that it puts in requisition some of the most powerful, as well as the most noble principles of human nature.

Gratitude, for instance—how much is there in the life of a missionary that makes its appeal to that. Mark that once a nighted Pagan, now rejoicing in the faith and hope of the glorious gospel. He comprehends something of the import of the change that has passed upon him; he knows that it is a change from death to life, and that its consequences will run through the whole eternal future. He knows too *who* has been the instrument of the change—that it is a man by his side—a man who has come from afar to lead him to the cross and to Heaven; *who* shall fix a limit to his gratitude toward such a benefactor. And the church that employs him as her agent—shall not

so consider herself a debtor to him for doing the very hardest her work ; and shall not her thankful remembrance of him be immensurate with her obligations ? And is there anything in death to chill the warm current of grateful emotion towards an acknowledged benefactor and friend ? Rather does not this thicken its flow, and, for a season at least, render the mind more wakeful to everything that pertains to his character and life ? Think you that the converted pagan will feel, after the funeral of the missionary who has been the instrument of his conversion is over, that he may now afford to dismiss him from his thoughts and regards, and enjoy the benefits of Christianity without thinking of the medium through which he has received them ? I tell you that he will connect the name of that missionary with every thing that he values most ; he will embalm his instructions and example as the most precious of all legacies ; and he will never cease to recognize in him a helper, so long as he remains outside the gate of heaven. And do you suppose that the church at home will lose all sense of her obligation to him, as soon as she has become familiar with the fact of his departure ? So far from it, that after years have passed away, she will still pronounce his name with grateful reverence ; and, though others may enter into his labors, and in their turn occupy her regards and require her supervision, yet nothing,—no, nothing will cause him to die out of her cherished recollections. And as he lives in the gratitude of those whom he leaves behind, both on Pagan ground and on Christian ground, and as gratitude is essentially a wakeful and active principle, it cannot be but that they will continue to feel the inspiration of his thoughts, his labors, his efforts ;—in short, that he will be a vigorous worker on earth after he has descended to the grave.

Another principle of our nature, on which the influence of a missionary acts, is sympathy. He goes off, indeed, voluntarily, cheerfully ; he smiles when he takes the last look of his friends, as if he should soon see them again ; but the truth is, he goes away to suffer—he goes to die. The secret feeling of his heart when that smile is upon his countenance, as he takes his father, or mother, or sister, by the hand, “ I never shall look upon your face again, the ocean will soon separate us, and our next meeting will be on the other side of the dark river of death.” He has counted the cost of the enterprise, and there are no sacri-

fices involved in it from which he is disposed to shrink. And his experience answers well to his expectations. Even under the most favorable circumstances, his life is little less than a continuous routine of severe labor, performed in the face of great obstacles, and under much discouragement; while, in some cases, he has to encounter difficulties and perils before which any mere earthly resolution might well falter. But the church which has commissioned him to this self-denying work, does not leave him to perform his labors, to endure his trials, without her sympathy; and *that* opens both the mind and the heart wide to his influence. He is indeed an object for her sympathy only while he lives; but her remembrance of what he has suffered continues longer, and gives additional value to all the blessed results of his labors. I appeal to you, who have felt your hearts sometimes bathed in sorrow, as you have contemplated the sufferings of our missionary brethren while they were living, whether you do not find now, in the remembrance of those sufferings, a kindling up afresh of your missionary zeal; whether you are not conscious of laboring more patiently and more cheerfully, in consideration of the thorny path which they have trod—possibly of the bloody path by which they have ascended to glory.

Our natural admiration of whatever is heroic or magnanimous in human conduct, is another principle that goes to help the posthumous influence of the missionary. It cannot be denied that this principle exists in a degree, as one of the elements of our nature—the name of Alfred, of Washington, of Wilberforce—of any man of lofty patriotism, or enlarged philanthropy, will find a responsive chord in any bosom in which the reign of selfishness is not so absolute as to constitute an anomaly in the species. But this principle, when it has passed under the purifying and quickening influence of the gospel, becomes far more vigorous and elevated in its operations—it wakes more especially then to the sublime achievements of *Christian* heroism—such achievements as make part of the life of almost every evangelical missionary. And as the record of those achievements survives the bodily existence of their author, so the admiration that is felt for them is perpetuated through the record—no matter whether it be written in a book without, or in the book within. And that which you thus hold to your mind in admiration, will diffuse itself through your heart as an element of moral power;—it will

quicken your thoughts, it will strengthen your faith, it will enoble your aspirations, it will throw new glory around the missionary enterprise, it will heighten your estimate of the privilege of laboring in your own sphere to carry the enterprise forward. The examples of the highest *earthly* heroism, which the world never grows weary of eulogizing, are not to be brought into comparison with those examples of *Christian* heroism, whose history begins with the purpose of perpetual self-exile from country and home to preach the gospel to the Heathen, and ends with the terrible experience of martyrdom, at the hands of the very Heathen whose salvation they went to secure.

I only add, in the way of accounting for the power of this posthumous influence, that it is identified with the faithfulness and grace of God.

The very constitution of God's providence secures the transmission and the perpetuity of all human influence. Not only is it true that no *good* man liveth to himself, but that *no* man, whatever his character may be, liveth to himself, or even to his generation alone; but by one of God's unchangeable laws, his actions may be said not only to have a perpetual existence, but to exist in a perpetual progress. A deed is done that perhaps startles the world as an exhibition of depravity; or perhaps it is blazoned through the world as an example of lofty virtue; but after a little while its interest begins to wane; and it gradually dies out of the thoughts—possibly out of the memories of men. The truth is, however, when it is first performed it is a thing in its infancy; but, notwithstanding mortals may lose sight of it, it has still a regular growth, and will be towering away into something mightier and still mightier, to all eternity. Now this is one of the great principles of the divine administration; and God is ever faithful to the execution of his own plan. But in the case to which I am referring, there is something more specific—something that belongs more particularly to God's *gracious* economy. He has promised to his people, both as individuals and as a body, that all things shall work together for their good; and is it not fairly included in this promise, not only that death shall not harm their immortal spirits, but that it shall not extinguish or arrest in any degree the good influence of their lives? The most imperfect Christian that dies has a pledge that his Redeemer will have an eye upon the works of his hands that he

leaves behind him ; will see that no good seed that he has sown is prevented from being quickened and developed, and ripened into an immortal harvest. But the missionary to the Heathen is supposed to have been an eminently faithful servant of Christ ; to have labored in circumstances of extreme difficulty ; to have made sacrifices to which the mass of Christians are not called ; and as the measure of reward is proportioned to the measure of fidelity, and as part of his reward must consist in the perpetuity and growth of his usefulness on earth, we may feel assured that the power and grace of God will be specially manifest to secure this end ; that, as his Redeemer took care of him to the last, and saw him safely through the dark valley, so He will take care of that invisible representative of him that remains in the characters which he has helped to mould, and the institutions which he has assisted to establish. Yes, faithful man of God, just on the eve of going up from Pagan darkness into Heavenly glory—leaving part of thy joy and crown behind thee—thou mayest have perfect confidence that thy mission on earth will still be going on, whilst thy spirit shall be prosecuting a more glorious mission in Heaven !

III. It only remains, in the third place, to speak of this influence in respect to the grandeur of its results. Whatever can be said on this topic, must necessarily be applicable, in a greater or less degree, to the influence of *every* good man, especially every one who has been distinguished for his usefulness : still the general truths at which I shall hint, fairly admit of a specific application to the case we are contemplating.

Let me say then, we connect with these results the idea of perpetual and progressive blessing ; and there is grandeur in *that*.

We gain our highest ideas of the grandeur of the Supreme Being, from the fact that his administration is an ever-active, ever-enduring course of beneficence ; and while his Almighty energies are always awake, carrying forward and bringing out his wonderful plan, such are the arrangements of the great system, that one event legitimately operates to the production of another ; and thus the whole is a perfectly well balanced train of causes and effects. Take any one of God's gracious acts you will—no matter how little it may have originally attracted the attention of the world, it becomes a fountain of blessing, whose streams are constantly widening and deepening, and will continue to do so

forever. Now there is something quite analogous to this in the case of the devoted missionary. He lights up fires here and there which seem to burn feebly—perhaps sometimes to be on the point of extinction; and yet they are to burn on to all eternity. Possibly when he is called to his reward, he may be able to see but little apparent fruit of his labors—he may be able to count but a few who have been hopefully converted through his instrumentality; and yet that small number may multiply itself, as the generations pass away, into a number too great for him to count; and when he stands in the judgment, he may be overwhelmed with joyful surprise to see what a blessed influence his poor labors on Heathen ground have had upon the immortal destinies of myriads.

Pause, for a moment, at different points in the progress of the missionary's influence, and see whether I am attributing to it anything which it cannot fairly claim. Let the first point be when the generation next succeeding him has passed off the stage, and how many witnesses to his beneficence, think you, will he now have in Heaven; and how many will be scattering blessings on earth, who, but for his instrumentality in respect to a preceding generation, would have remained strangers to all spiritual blessings themselves? Stop next amidst the splendors of the millennial morning; and when you see how the darkness has all passed from what was once the field of his labors, and what an influence has gone forth from that spot towards the establishment of the Redeemer's universal gracious reign,—tell me whether you have any line to measure the magnitude of the work which he has performed. Advance now to the scenes of the judgment; when the little leaven that he deposited in a dark corner of the world shall have had ages more in which to operate; when the effects of his labors shall be brought into a new light, and their expansive tendency shall be fully manifest; and then pronounce, if you can, upon the amazing grandeur of the results which you are contemplating. But still the great idea of eternity urges itself upon us—what has seemed, in each of these cases to be a result, has been but the starting point of a fresh career—the basis of another result; and even the vast accumulation of blessings which the judgment shall reveal, will be but the germ of what shall be displayed in the progress of eternal ages.

I remark, further, that the results of this influence are invested

with superlative grandeur, whether we consider them as a matter of mystery or a matter of revelation. It is only for a brief period, after this influence has begun to operate, that we can trace it with any degree of precision—it is like a stream that flows a little way upon the surface of the earth, and then hides itself, spreading out into innumerable branches, and diffusing life and fertility in every direction. You know that the missionary's influence is still at work; you know that it is moulding the characters of men for a higher state; but you do *not* know the multiplied channels through which it passes; nor can you single out the particular monuments which have marked its progress. John Calvin acted as a missionary in the highest sense towards his own countrymen. And when he died, the work that he had accomplished, seemed visible and palpable; but though his influence has actually been increasing ever since, it has so commingled with the influence of other great minds, and has operated so silently, yet so effectively, in moulding human institutions and elevating human destiny, that we can speak of it now only in the most general terms—we cannot pretend accurately to define its extent, or to follow it out in its endless ramifications. And is there not something sublime in all this darkness? Is there not deep moral grandeur in the thought that this influence is working with mighty power, night and day, not only in different lands, but in different worlds, while yet there rests upon the minute details of its operation, a veil that perhaps nothing short of Omniscience is able to penetrate?

But if there is grandeur in the present mystery, there will be grandeur no less in the future revelation. The last scene in the drama of human existence will by and by come; and then a curtain will rise to disclose to us the mysterious workings of human influence in all preceding ages. Then, for the first time, will there be a display of all the fruits of the devoted missionary's labors. Oh, when it shall appear that, in his humble walk among the poor Heathen, he was touching chords whose blessed vibrations were felt in other continents; when there shall be representatives of each successive generation rising up to greet him as their eternal benefactor; when the process shall be revealed by which during his long slumber in the grave, he was clearing up this wilderness of sin, and sending forward to Heaven plants of righteousness, destined to an immortal growth;—oh,

who of us will take it upon himself to describe the grandeur of the scene, when the day for these revelations shall come! Are not our highest conceptions of the results of the missionary's influence, as they will be seen in the light of that day, poor and groveling and unsatisfactory?

But the crowning consideration illustrative of the grandeur of these results, is drawn from their connexion with the mediatorial triumph of the Son of God. It is not irreverent to say that Jesus himself, in entering upon the scene of his humiliation, became a foreign missionary; for he came from a world radiant with the beams of immortal truth, to dissipate the darkness that had gathered over this rebellious province of Jehovah's empire. He came indeed for other and higher purposes than to preach the doctrine of salvation. He came to pay the price of salvation by his death; to pour contempt upon death by his resurrection; and having accomplished these great ends by his brief sojourn on earth, He went back to Heaven, and was invested with the full honors of the mediatorial throne; and in this exalted capacity He is administering at this hour the government of the universe. And now as sure as the covenant of redemption is not a farce; as sure as the promise of God is not a lie; as sure as the Father hath committed all authority to the Son, and made Him Head over all things to the church;—so sure is it that his mediatorial work must be crowned with an ultimate and eternal triumph. And is not the foreign missionary who goes to enlighten those who are in darkness, associated with his Redeemer in the mediatorial enterprise to the very letter? The gospel which he proclaims is the same which his Master proclaimed before him; the opposition which he experiences is dictated by the same spirit which resisted his Master's benevolent efforts; the cause in which he suffers is the same in which his Master shed his blood; instead of staying at home, he goes abroad, just as his Master came from Heaven to earth; and as there is an identity of spirit, of purpose, of action, so there will be also a community of reward and triumph. I say, then, if you will come up, even according to the measure of your feeble capacity, to an adequate estimate of the grandeur that pertains to the results of the labors of the missionary, you must contemplate those results as identified with the grandeur of Christ's mediation; with the ever increasing revenue of glory and praise of which He is to be the subject.

Is not the train of thought into which we have now fallen,

fitted at once to exalt our conceptions of the missionary enterprise, and to quicken our zeal for sustaining and advancing it? To the eye of sense that penetrates not beneath the surface of things, the work of a foreign missionary may be invested with little either of dignity or of attraction; and they who engage in it may seem more worthy of being pitied for their weakness, than honored for their benevolence and self-denial. What! exchange ease, safety, comfort, friends, for perpetual banishment from every humanizing influence; for exposure to innumerable perils; for sinking early into a martyr's grave! I tell thee, Caviller, thou art blind—there is a glory pertaining to the character and office of that humble missionary, which, for want of spiritual discernment, thou canst not see, but which really reduces to insignificance the highest distinction which it has ever entered thy selfish and worldly heart to covet. Be it so that that missionary suffers all that thy dark forebodings and faithless spirit would allot to him—yes, all, even to a violent death; still he has given himself to a glorious vocation; he is acting under Christ's authority; he is doing Christ's work; he survives himself in the influence of his earthly labors; and to that influence neither man nor angel may say,—“Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther.” He sows upon a hard and circumscribed field, but the seed, by endless reproduction, diffuses itself everywhere, so that it is scarcely too much to say that immensity becomes the harvest field, as eternity becomes the gathering season. I reverence the devoted foreign missionary, not merely for his character, but for his work and his prospects: I honor the wisdom of his choice, even when I see the arrangements for his martyrdom going forward. I congratulate you, Friends of missions, on your having identified yourselves with such a cause. Your views of its importance cannot be too exalted; your efforts for its promotion cannot be too earnest; your confidence of its success cannot be too sanguine.

Again: the subject on which we have been meditating may well qualify our mourning, when those whom we send to labor among the Heathen are taken away, in the midst of their usefulness. It must be acknowledged that even Zion herself seems sometimes, when smarting under these bereavements, not more than half to remember that her “God reigneth.” The eye of her faith is not piercing enough to see through the surrounding darkness into the region of clear and satisfying light that lies beyond.

The tidings come that some one of her missionaries, in respect to whom she had indulged the highest hopes, has fallen; and instead of interpreting the event wisely, she hangs her harps on the willows, and sits down weeping and wondering who will take care of the Lord's cause in a strange land. But let her not thus dishonor herself by faithless and unsubmitive mourning. The missionary who is gone she must, indeed, strike from her list; but there is a high sense in which death has not been able to drive him from the field. He has still an invisible agency there; and though she may imagine that she is sending a man in his place, she is really sending one to co-operate with him who has departed. What a throb of anguish, reaching to the inmost heart of the Church, was occasioned a few years ago by the intelligence that one of the brightest lights which we had, or which any church had, in the missionary field, was suddenly extinguished by the hand of violence! It seemed the bitterest cup which God had ever put into our hands; and it was by no common effort of Christian faith that we were enabled to say—"Not our will, but thine be done." But with the light that shines even now upon that dispensation, who can entertain a doubt that, appalling and overwhelming as it was, it was ordained as a channel of blessing to the missionary enterprise? Who can doubt that that accomplished and beloved missionary, being dead, yet speaketh, in some respects, even more impressively, more effectively, than if he had continued on earth, the living man? He speaketh in the hallowed record of his brief but eminently useful course; he speaketh in the mature productions of his gifted and well-trained mind, and his devout and deeply sanctified spirit; he speaketh especially in that last scene in which faith proved itself stronger than death; in which he joined the noble army of martyrs with a dignified serenity that must have been alike wonderful and terrible to his Pagan murderers. Yes, he speaketh for the cause of missions to the ends of the earth; and he will continue to speak to the end of time. Let not the remembrances of our brother, then, be too mournful; for though his death-scene shocked our sensibilities, there was mighty power in it; though his Master early said to him,—“Come up hither,” yet He has not denied to him the honor of still being a preacher of righteousness on opposite sides of the globe.

Finally: How fitting is it that the Church should render due

honor to her departed missionaries—not merely keep them in grateful remembrance herself, but erect suitable monuments to testify concerning them to future generations. It is a duty which she owes to them; for as they have labored faithfully in her service, both reason and gratitude demand such a tribute at her hands. It is a duty which she owes to herself; for it is through this channel especially that she may hope to receive a larger measure of the missionary spirit. It is a duty which she owes to the cause of missions, and the universal cause of Christ; for though God has made provision in the constitution of his providence for the transmission of the influence of the missionary in respect to the world's final regeneration, yet it devolves upon the church in a great measure to decide in what degree of strength the current shall descend. It is a duty which she owes to the Head of the church; for He is jealous for the honor of these his servants; and in commemorating their shining virtues, she helps to illustrate his mediatorial glory. I say again, then, let the church see to it that no veil of oblivion is suffered to fall upon the names or the lives of her departed missionaries. Let her not be slow, especially where they have been eminent for their gifts and graces and labors—let her not be slow to put the press in requisition for sending forth an enduring record of their characters and their lives; and when they have left productions of a high intellectual as well as spiritual character, let her secure to these also a mission of good, giving to them the most extended circulation that she can. Thrice honored men, who have been called up from Heathen ground, to enter into the joy of your Lord,—we pledge ourselves, as the friends of the cause for which ye lived and died, that in our generation at least, your names shall not be forgotten, your memories shall not be dishonored!

I have said that it is the duty of the church to embalm the memories of her missionaries—let me add that it devolves upon her, no less to perform the same grateful office for those who have had a primary agency in conducting her operations, and especially in training her sons who have been personally devoted to the work. And now I doubt not that there is rising up before you the image of a venerated father, whose relation to the missionary cause was more intimate and vital, than that of almost any of his honored contemporaries, and whose name, since your last anniversary, has appeared on the list of the dead. He seems

to have been eminently the friend of missions, from the time that he enlisted as a soldier of the cross. It was in the capacity of a missionary that he commenced his ministry—the backwoods of Virginia echoed to some of the first bursts of his youthful eloquence. As his sphere of influence, and his relations to the church became more extended, the great idea of evangelizing the world held his spirit as if by a charm; and it manifestly gave a complexion to all the labors of his life. Before we had a foreign missionary organization in our own church, he coöperated in a spirit of enlarged liberality with Christians of other communions; and on one occasion at least, his persuasive power was put forth in aid of the missionary cause in connection with another Board,* and since the formation of this Board, which is believed to have been a favorite object with him, you all know how its interests have pressed upon his heart, and put in requisition both his eloquence and his wisdom. And then he presided at the great fountain of missionary influence in our church; he had a primary agency in moulding the minds of most of our young men who have entered the missionary field; and even many who have not engaged directly in the work, have still labored more effectually for it at home, from having had communion with his spirit, and enjoyed the benefit of his instructions. When his sun went down in such serene glory, leaving the whole horizon flooded with its illuminations, it seemed indeed to the friends of missions as if a bright orb had been struck from their hemisphere: but it had only taken its place in a higher system; aye, and it continues still to shine down upon earth—it shines both on Christian and Heathen lands—some of its beams are reflected even upon us, at the very moment we are mourning its departure.

But my heart would reproach me, if I should speak of Doctor Alexander alone. I think of him—I desire always to think of him, as in goodly fellowship with another kindred spirit, who shared with him the labors of nearly forty years; who preceded him as the Head of this Board; who lived as much for the cause of missions as he did himself; and upon whose grave the turf had scarcely withered, when his venerable colleague was laid by his side. I am sure that I speak in the hearing of those whose pulsations become quicker and warmer at the mention of these

* Dr. Alexander preached the annual sermon before the American Board in 1829.

venerable men. As they were so intimately united on earth, and were so quickly reunited in Heaven, let them be embalmed together in our grateful remembrances. I love to think of their posthumous influence, as if it were the influence of one great spirit. Together let their mantles descend from generation to generation, as a sacred and perpetual legacy to the church.