

The Assembly Herald

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HOME MISSIONS

DECEMBER TOPIC—THE OLDER STATES; MOUNTAINEERS

Evangelize the Immigrant.

The Presbyterian Church plans to meet the incoming tide of immigrants with the gospel. The General Assembly in Los Angeles instructed the Board of Home Missions and self-supporting Synods to co-operate in an evangelistic campaign among the foreign population coming to this country. What will long be considered one of the most important conferences ever held by representatives of the Presbyterian Church throughout the country met recently in the rooms of the Board of Home Missions, New York City. After a two days' session, it adjourned to inaugurate what promises to be the most extensive campaign ever planned for the evangelization of the immigrants coming to our shores. Official representatives were present from the following Synods: Baltimore, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. In some of these Synods a large work among foreigners has already been well begun.

Representative workers of the Syrian, Italian, Bohemian, German and Hungarian races were also present by invitation, and it was a memorable scene when these men, some of them in broken English, showed how few are

the laborers and how great is the need, and pleaded that the gospel might be given to their countrymen.

At the meeting of the Board which followed the conference, the immediate supervision of work among our foreigners was placed in the hands of Dr. Dixon. This was in cordial response to the Assembly's direction that an officer of the Board be designated for this service. Dr. Dixon's former connection with the work of self-supporting Synods, in which are large numbers of foreigners, fits him peculiarly for this position.

Resolutions have been adopted and plans outlined which are a bugle call to the whole Church. The Board of Home Missions and the representatives of the Synods have inaugurated an aggressive movement to give the gospel to the foreign born who are now coming by millions to our land. It is calculated to enlist the hearty co-operation of every lover of his country as well as of his fellow-men, for unless this great incoming host is given the gospel of Jesus, the past and present glorious history of our country will be seriously imperilled. Evangelization means good citizenship.

Rev. John D. Wells, D.D.

At the meeting of the Board, November 2nd, the death of Dr. Wells, its President, was reported, and Dr. Ellinwood was instructed to prepare the following Minute:

The Board having learned of the death of its aged and beloved President, Rev. John D. Wells, D. D., appointed one of its Executive officers to prepare a Minute expressive of its heartfelt love for the deceased, and its high appreciation of his long continued and most useful service as a member and as a presiding officer.

Full and interesting accounts having been given by the daily press of the remarkable career of the deceased, no extended recapitulation is needed here. But it seems desirable to emphasize such salient points in his history as bear upon his Christian character and his work as a pastor, and as an efficient administrator in the great work of Missions.

Dr. Wells was born at Whitesboro, N. Y., October 25, 1815. Losing his parents at an early age, he found a home in the family of his maternal grandfather, Rev. John Dunlap. The grandfather also died when the young lad was but fourteen years of age. Between the ages of fifteen and eighteen he was engaged as a clerk in a manufacturing establishment at Yorkville, N. Y.

At eighteen he became a pupil in a school taught by Rev. N. S. Prime, at Sing Sing, N. Y. His collegiate education was pursued at Union College, Schenectady, N. Y., and he entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton, 1840.

From the first his abilities and his transparent Christian character won the confidence of the late James Lenox, who employed him in a chapel at New Hamburg, N. Y., for two

summers and later in a small church enterprise in New York City, which he was compelled to leave on account of broken health.

In 1847 he accompanied the late Walter Lowrie, Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, in a tour among the tribes of the Indian Territory, thus strengthening that deep interest in Foreign Missions which rendered him so efficient an advocate and helper in that great cause to the very last.



REV. J. D. WELLS.

In 1854 he was appointed a member of the Executive Committee of the Foreign Board, in which capacity he served until the incorporation of the Board as at present organized, in 1862, in which he continued to serve until his death. He was always prominent and efficient in the work of various committees of the Board, until 1884, when he was chosen President, in which capacity he has served during the past nineteen years. Though repeatedly requesting that his name might be dropped on account of the infirmity of partial

deafness, his resignation was never accepted, but he was affectionately urged to continue in that service which he loved, and he presided for the last time, very efficiently and with apparent good health, on October 5th of the present year.

As the President of the Board and an active participant in all its affairs, Dr. Wells was highly valued by all its members as an officer, but was chiefly beloved as a man. His personality was the dominant factor. The simplicity with which he bore himself on all occasions, the charity which he extended to all others, and the unfeigned humility with which he regarded himself, were influences of inestimable worth.

But Dr. Wells had won a place equally high as a pastor. Many of his contemporaries well remember the satisfaction with which they regarded his generous policy as a pastor in Brooklyn, where the undoubted love which he cherished toward his particular congregation seemed always dominated by a higher and broader love for the kingdom of Christ in the section of the city in which he lived and labored. There is often a temptation to a pastor in his laudable desire to build up a particular church to look grudgingly upon any suggestions tending toward colonization. But Dr. Wells could not have cherished a broader interest if he had been bishop over the whole Eastern District in which he labored. Swarming out seemed to become the bee-like instinct of his congregation, for he had inculcated the same generous spirit among his people, and to-day the churches of Ainslie Street, Ross Street and Throop Avenue rejoice to be known as the daughters of the mother church whose missionary character was so steadily fostered and cultivated by their beloved pastor.

The broad and catholic spirit of the deceased extended even beyond his own denomination, as was attested by the responsive sympathy which was shown on various occasions by churches of other denominations, including Universalists and Roman Catholics.

Though most firm in his convictions and faithful in upholding the doctrines of his own beloved Church, he was most tolerant toward those who differed from him. He regarded the kingdom of Christ and the communion of saints as far wider than the bounds of any denominational fold.

It was doubtless owing largely to a sunny and genial temperament, and still more to the happy trust and love which were apparent in his Christian experience, that he was enabled to retain his faculties, even the ability to preach, more or less, to the very end. For

several years heaven has seemed to him a clear and unquestioned reality, and he has often been heard to express with Paul a preference to depart and be with Jesus.

Those who have known Dr. Wells the best, have felt that perhaps no other man of their acquaintance exerted an influence so helpful to the spiritual life of all who indulged the hope of a great salvation.

Though a man of the most spiritual type he was always free from cant or any appearance of an undue self-consciousness. He spoke freely and unreservedly of spiritual things—but with entire freedom from all sanctimoniousness of manner or of spirit. His love for his Saviour was as simple and unaffected, as the love of a child, for his mother. He strengthened the faith and quickened the love and aspiration of all his associates by the purity and manifest reality of his faith in God.

It was a noticeable characteristic of Dr. Wells that in matters of missionary policy, though always safely conservative, he was never obstructive. Even after he had passed the limits of four-score years, he was still in active sympathy with every reasonable measure of progress. All his ideas in matters of policy and steps of advancement were broad and elastic. His enthusiastic co-operation was always to be depended upon. His character shone in his face, in which great age seemed tempered by a youthful freshness and a saintly beauty.

The Board would express its profound sense of loss in the death of one whom it has so long honored and so deeply loved, and it would assure Dr. Wells' children of its warm sympathy with them in their bereavement. Feeling keenly its loss, the Board yet recognizes that for its beloved President it is far better that he should be with Christ, and it rejoices with him with feelings of gratitude, for his godly memory.

