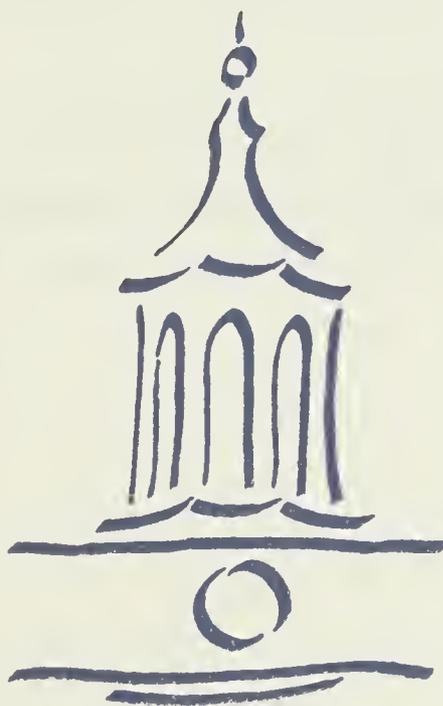


SONS
OF THE PROPHETS

*Leaders in Protestantism from
Princeton Seminary*

EDITED BY HUGH T. KERR



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V. SHELDON JACKSON (1834-1909)

*Christ's Fool and Seward's Folly**

BY HERMANN N. MORSE

As much as one man can ever be said to typify a great movement, Sheldon Jackson was the personification of Home Missions in its greatest period of continental expansion. Dedicated to the ministry by his parents at the baptismal font, he grew up never doubting that he was born to be a preacher of the Gospel and a missionary. Rejected for reasons of health when he offered himself for missionary service abroad, he entered upon a career in this country that made incredible demands upon his not too robust physique through fifty years of strenuous activity.

This was no ordinary man. No one whose path he crossed could be indifferent to him. He made warm friends and bitter enemies. He received extravagant praise and equally extravagant abuse. At times he perplexed and dismayed his supporters by his seeming recklessness. When he saw a need it was not in his nature to count the cost before committing himself. He felt this way when he began his career and still

* The following lives of Sheldon Jackson are typical: *Sheldon Jackson*, by Robert Laird Stewart (New York: Revell, 1908); *The Alaskan Pathfinder*, by John Thomson Faris (New York: Revell, 1926); *The Bishop of All Beyond*, by Winifred Hulbert (New York: Friendship Press, 1948); "Sheldon Jackson, Planter of Churches," by Alvin K. Bailey, *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, Volume xxvi, No. 3, Sept. 1948, pp. 129-148; Volume xxvi, No. 4, Dec. 1948, pp. 193-214; Volume xxvii, No. 1, March 1949, pp. 21-40; *Presbyterian Panorama*, by Clifford M. Drury (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, 1952); *Alaskan Apostle*, by Arthur J. Lazell (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960); "Sheldon Jackson, Presbyterian Lobbyist," by Theodore C. Hinckley, *Journal of Presbyterian History*, Volume 40, No. 1, March 1962, pp. 3-23. The Presbyterian Historical Society, Witherspoon Bldg., Philadelphia, has files of Jackson's articles and correspondence and copies of the *Rocky Mountain Presbyterian* periodical he founded and edited (1872-1886). Speer Library, Princeton Seminary, has copies of his letters and many of his copybooks relating to Alaska.

felt this way when he ended it a half-century later. But what he accomplished is a story without parallel in home mission annals. Restless, dynamic, always on the move; indefatigable and undaunted in the face of any difficulty or danger; always reaching for more than he could grasp but ending up grasping it; sensitive to the needs of others but careless of his own; completely trusting what he believed to be God's promises while obeying what he believed to be his commands—it is easy to understand the many epithets that were applied to him. He was called “The St. Paul of America,” “The Wild Horseman of the Rockies,” “The Continental Circuit-Rider,” “The Missionary with the Flying Coattails,” “The Bishop of all Beyond,” and, of course, “pioneer,” “pathfinder,” “prospector,” and the like.

Theodore L. Cuyler, writing of the biography of Sheldon Jackson, said: “Amid the crowd of new books I bespeak a clear track for one that reads like an added chapter to the ‘Acts of the Apostles.’ . . . A herald of Jesus Christ who has traversed nearly a million miles by stages and buckboards, by ox-carts and reindeer sledges—who has faced hostile Indians and arctic ice-floes—who has founded one-hundred Presbyterian Churches and a large number of Sunday Schools—who has delivered nearly four thousand public addresses as hot as an anthracite coal fire—who has done the same kind of pioneer work for the vast region of Alaska that Livingstone did for Africa, and has made his name as visible in the spiritual history of the ‘New West’ as Pike’s Peak or Mount McKinley. Such a man, who has wrought such achievements, is not surpassed by any living Christian minister on this continent.”

Just one thing makes Sheldon Jackson’s story explicable: he was through and through a missionary. The knowledge of any place that lacked the preaching of the Gospel and the ministration of the Christian Church was to him an irresistible appeal. The text by which he lived and would have the Church live—and from which he often preached—was Moses’ command to the people of Israel: “Begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit the land” (Deut. 2:31).

As this is the story of a native of New York State who

wrote his name over the face of the West, from the Missouri River to the Pacific and from the Mexican border to the shores of the Arctic Ocean, it is an interesting coincidence that the year of his birth, 1834, was the year in which another great pioneer missionary, Marcus Whitman, also a New Yorker, committed himself to his trail-blazing mission to the Indians of the Northwest. The two never met since Whitman's death by massacre occurred while Jackson was still a school boy. But one can think of Jackson as Whitman's spiritual heir. On Whitman's statue in the National Capitol are carved these words, taken from his journal, which apply as well to one man as to the other: "My plans require time and distance." How much time, how great a distance no one could have foreseen.

I

In an autobiographical sketch prepared for the Women's Board of Home Missions, Jackson covered the first twenty-four years of his life in just three sentences: "I was born in Minaville, New York, in 1834—Valley of the Mohawk. My father was a well-to-do farmer. I was sent through the usual routine of schools, Union College, Princeton Theological Seminary, where I graduated in 1858, when I was ordained; graduated, ordained, and married within one week." He often commented on how many important things had happened to him in the month of May. In this month he was born, graduated from college, graduated from seminary, ordained, married, received his first missionary appointment, began his career as Superintendent of Home Missions in the West, was elected Moderator of the General Assembly. And it was in this month that he died.

During his seminary years he felt a strong call to the foreign mission field. He wrote that "a band of us held a Sabbath evening prayer-meeting in our rooms where we cultivated a spirit of missions." He offered himself to the Board of Foreign Missions for service in Asia, Africa, or South America, but the unfavorable report of a physician closed those doors to him. However, the board offered him a commission to work among

the Choctaw Indians (who were then regarded as a responsibility of Foreign Missions) "as they could get me home easy . . . they thought I was not strong, but I had an iron constitution with the exception of dyspepsia." He accepted the appointment and with his wife, during the summer of 1858, traveled across the country by train, boat, stage coach, and private conveyance to Spencer Academy in the Indian Territory.

This, as it turned out, was a brief and not too satisfactory experience since his susceptibility to malaria compelled him to withdraw from the field in the following spring. However, several circumstances combined to give it significance for his later career. His experience convinced him of the importance of the mission school in the opening of work in new areas and particularly in ministry to exceptional populations. Later he was the most persistent advocate of such schools in Utah and on Indian- and Spanish-speaking fields. To him belongs most of the credit for the organization, nearly twenty years later, of the Women's Board of Home Missions, which had this as its special responsibility. Further, his missionary instinct did not permit him to confine his work to the school room. Between his bouts with malaria, he made the rounds of the settlements within his reach, living with the Indians and preaching to them; for a time he averaged a service a day.

In the spring, when Jackson and his wife could be released without embarrassment to the work of the mission, they started north to get away from the malaria. After a brief visit with his family, who sometime before this had moved from New York to Illinois, he accepted a commission from the Board of Domestic Missions for work in Minnesota. This began an association that, in one form or another, was to continue for the rest of his life. The commission stated that it was issued "on the application of the Churches of La Crescent, Hokah and vicinity, Minnesota; and by the recommendation of the Presbytery of Winnebago" and that the members of the board "have appropriated the sum of Three Hundred (\$300) Dollars, to aid in the support of the Reverend Sheldon Jackson as Pastor or stated supply of such Churches." As Jackson's biographer, Robert Laird Stewart, points out, one

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of the notable things about this commission was that "the Churches named in it were non-existent at the date of its issue, or, in other words, they were not yet organized." As for the salary of \$300, Dr. Jackson many years later remarked, "in Minnesota we sometimes suffered on this salary." Nevertheless, he accepted and at once began his work.

La Crescent, a village of fifty or sixty homes on the Mississippi River opposite La Crosse, Wisconsin, was on the route that many westward bound migrants followed. The whole territory around it was practically destitute of religious privileges. Characteristically, Jackson interpreted his commission as applying not only to La Crescent and nearby Hokah but to every settled place in any direction that he could possibly reach on horseback, by buggy or sleigh, or as often as not on foot. His circuit quickly came to include thirteen counties in Minnesota and five in Wisconsin.

His ministry in Minnesota continued for ten years, 1859-1869, the last five of which he made his home in Rochester, where he had earlier assisted in organizing a promising church. During this ten years he organized or assisted in organizing twenty-three churches. He was instrumental in securing ministers for most of them and made himself personally responsible to see that they did not lack support. He established what he called his "Raven Fund" and solicited gifts of money and missionary boxes of clothing that saved the day for many a hard-pressed minister and his family. What the Mission Board's chronically depleted treasury did not permit it to do, Jackson, as a one-man, volunteer missionary agency, somehow managed to do. Not all of his work endured but much of it did. Through this difficult decade of the Civil War, with one brief intermission for service as a chaplain with the Union forces in Tennessee, he kept the Gospel light burning in many a frontier community.

The experience of these years was preparing Jackson, just as the circumstances of the times were preparing the nation, for what was ahead in the vast westward expansion with which the next period of his life was to be associated.

II

On Prospect Hill in Sioux City, Iowa, overlooking the Missouri River, stands a monument bearing the following inscription:

To commemorate the Prospect Hill Prayer Meeting held by Sheldon Jackson, Thomas H. Cleland, John C. Elliott, Ministers of the Gospel, on this hilltop, April 29, 1869, which inaugurated the movement for the evangelization of the great North West and the regions beyond.

Erected by the Presbyterian Church,
A.D. 1913. Prayer availeth much.

Many years later Dr. Jackson wrote of the emotion that overwhelmed them as these three Presbyterian ministers, contemplating the extent of the spiritual desolation of the great area of the West, prayed "for divine help and strength and self-denial and consecration" and "for faith that the all-conquering Cross would yet triumph over these desolations."

They could see then, as in retrospect we can see even more clearly, how fraught with destiny that day was for the Church and for the nation. Seven years earlier, before the war ended, Congress had passed the Homestead Act opening the West to settlement. By the end of the decade, throngs of settlers were on their way west. This movement was to continue at an accelerating pace until, twenty years later, the Census Bureau would announce that the day of the frontier had ended. Shortly after the close of the war the task of completing the construction of the first transcontinental railroad was undertaken, with the Central Pacific working eastward from San Francisco and the Union Pacific working westward from Omaha. On May 10, 1869, less than two weeks after Jackson and his friends prayed on Prospect Hill, the two branches met at Promontory Point, Utah, the golden spike was driven, and the transcontinental railroad was a reality.

It took very little imagination to see what would happen

along that line and throughout the territory that it served. Indeed, it was already happening. Up to this time, the westward progress of the Presbyterian Church had practically ended at the Missouri River, except for a half-dozen churches in Nebraska, a few scattered Indian missions, and some twenty churches on the Pacific slope. The significance and urgency of this were not lost on the Presbyterians of the Synod of Iowa. The Presbyterian Church as a whole was preparing itself for a new day with the impending reunion of the Old and New School branches, but it did not yet see clearly what its task of Church extension in the West was to be. The Old School Board of Domestic Missions lacked money and probably also lacked vision. The Board of Home Missions, which was to be the agency of the reunited Church, was not to be organized until July 1870.

In the fall of 1868 the Synod of Iowa petitioned the board for a district missionary to have charge of the evangelization of their frontier, but the request was denied due to lack of funds. The following spring three presbyteries of the synod took action and invited Sheldon Jackson to serve them as district missionary. The most significant of these actions was that taken by the Presbytery of Missouri River. As the western-most presbytery of the synod, it assumed that all the territory to the west as far as the eastern border of the Presbytery of Stockton in California was under its jurisdiction. Therefore its invitation to Sheldon Jackson was to serve as "superintendent of missions for Western Iowa, Nebraska, Dakota, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and Utah or as far as our jurisdiction extends."

This action was taken on May 1, 1869, the second day after the Prospect Hill prayer meeting. The terms of the invitation were not calculated unduly to restrict Jackson in his movements or plans. As a job description it was generously broad and vague. There was only one drawback. Unfortunately none of the three presbyteries had any money for the salary and expenses either of Jackson or of any missionaries whom he might secure. In fact, nothing was said about money. Nevertheless, Jackson accepted the appointment and went im-

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mediately to work. As the monument proclaims—"prayer availeth much." Within a week he had appointed three men to work along the line of the Union Pacific, one in Nebraska, one in Wyoming from Cheyenne to Rawlins, and one in western Wyoming and Utah. During the summer ten churches were organized in Nebraska, Wyoming, and Colorado. By the end of the year ten new missionaries had been put to work in Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah.

During the first eight months Jackson raised from private sources approximately \$10,000 to support this work. Rather unexpectedly, in the fall he and the missionaries whom he had appointed were commissioned by the Board of Domestic Missions. His own salary was set by the board at \$1,500 but without provision for travel expense.

III

In the extraordinary experiences to which this was the prelude, the characteristics and abilities which had been evident during the ten years of Jackson's service in Minnesota were given ample scope. First of all was his inborn missionary zeal, the constant, irresistible drive to extend the Church and to preach the Gospel to all who might otherwise be without it. "Go ye" meant to him just that, a highly personal command which kept forcing him to break through any barriers that impeded the advance of the Church. Second was his indefatigable energy. He was a small man of no unusual strength, built, as he used to say, to fit into small places. But nothing daunted him. He would tackle any difficulty, whether placed in his way by nature or by man. A fifty-mile tramp through drifting snow, a hundred miles on horseback or by sleigh or buckboard or canoe, five hundred miles by stage coach—this was routine.

A third trait was his willingness to assume responsibility. There is no evidence that he was personally ambitious for place or power, though this was occasionally alleged; but he was not reluctant to take the initiative beyond any authority duly assigned to him when this seemed necessary. Sooner or

later he would be officially justified for what he did, but he often did it first and received his authorization later. Fourth, he was possessed by an apparently naïve faith that what ought to be done could be done. His aptly named "Raven Fund" is indicative of his belief that resources would always be forthcoming. Certainly it is true that neither he nor any of the missionaries whom he sent out on the basis of that faith ever starved, though all of them frequently had anxious moments. Fifth, with all his faith, he was not one simply to wait until the Lord sent his ravens. He was a persuasive speaker and letter writer. We would say he had promotional gifts. Increasingly he won the confidence of the Church. The number of people who believed in him and were willing to back their belief with substantial gifts grew steadily. Sixth, he had a rare quality of imagination and ingenuity. He needed both in the tasks he undertook. He could keep a large stretch of territory and span of years more clearly in his mind than could most men. As far as his purposes went he was quite uncomplicated, but to get things done—so much with so little—he had constantly to improvise.

Of course, Jackson had also the defects of his virtues. There was the constant temptation to overreach, to undertake more than anyone could do, which left him open to the charge of recklessness and a lack of thoroughness. His relative failure in Montana, to which he could never give sufficient attention, is a case in point. It is also true that at times he ignored properly constituted authorities and used powers he did not really possess. One can sympathize with the often sorely harassed secretaries of the board. But, if they did not always appreciate his impetuosity and his gift for not listening to what he did not wish to hear, over the years they were grateful for what he accomplished and gave him their hearty support. In general his motives were not properly open to question—though often questioned—and in most instances his judgment in debatable situations was ultimately vindicated.

This period of Jackson's career covered approximately ten years, decisive years in the opening of the West and in the extension of the Church. During this one decade the total

population of the area for which he assumed missionary responsibility practically trebled. In Colorado it increased fivefold, in Nebraska and Arizona fourfold, in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming twofold. New towns were constantly appearing. Churches would be established while the towns were new and the country was developing. Some mistakes would be made. Some promising-looking places would fail to grow; that was a risk that had to be run. Jackson's policy here was dictated by theology rather than by sociology. Preach the Gospel to people where they are today and deal with the future when it comes.

Without question, a considerable measure of denominational rivalry was involved. That was part of the spirit of the time. But a prodigious job was done against great odds. Jackson himself participated in the organization of some eighty churches. He moved constantly back and forth across this great territory, with frequent trips east in search of funds. After the first year he had the energetic backing of Henry Kendall and Cyrus Dickson, the able secretaries of the newly constituted Board of Home Missions. In addition to the task of Church extension, he gave time and attention to mission work among the Indian tribes, particularly in Arizona, which officially came under his charge in 1875, and in the Mormon-dominated area of Utah.

In 1872, as a private venture, Sheldon Jackson began the publication of the *Rocky Mountain Presbyterian*, which he sent free to every active Presbyterian pastor. He published this paper for ten years and then gave it to the board. At about the same time he began vigorously to agitate for some means of establishing mission schools, particularly in Utah and in Indian- and Spanish-speaking fields. The Board of Home Missions withstood him in this, deeming the support of schools not properly within their responsibility. Therefore he turned his attention to the development of a Home Mission agency among the women of the Church. In this too he met opposition, some feeling that this would weaken the women's support of Foreign Missions. He persisted, with the somewhat reluctant support of Dr. Kendall, until in 1878 the Women's

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Executive Committee of Home Missions was duly organized, to work in cooperation with the Board of Home Missions, with a special concern for the support of missionary teachers. In this Jackson was moved by a profound conviction that in many missionary situations education was the real cutting edge of the missionary effort. Some years later, in an extension of this belief, he was instrumental in the organization of Westminster College in Utah, to which he personally gave \$50,000 that had come to him as a legacy.

It was Jackson's destiny, as it was his disposition, always to go before to prepare the way. This he did in a dozen western states. It was left to others to build as best they could on the foundations he laid. Writing in 1904 he pointed out that by then from the original actions of the Iowa presbyteries in 1869 had grown five synods with twenty presbyteries, 520 churches with 430 ministers and 41,252 members. But the credit for this was shared by many. By the end of the first decade his attention was being increasingly diverted to another field which was to be the crowning work of his missionary career although he continued to have an official relation to the work in the West until 1884.

IV

After the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867, an act for which Secretary Seward was widely ridiculed and berated, for some years neither the United States Congress nor the Christian Churches of America took seriously their responsibility for the welfare of the native population of that vast territory. It was not until 1884 that Congress passed a bill providing for a civil government in Alaska and making a modest initial provision for the education of its children. The Churches were almost as dilatory. Some beginnings of Christian work were made in the middle seventies by Christian Indians from British Columbia. These efforts and the very great need toward which they were directed deeply impressed several Christian men connected with the military forces stationed in Alaska as well as a British missionary who made a brief visit in



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1876. Appeals to different mission agencies were declined for lack of funds.

A. L. Lindsley, then pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Portland, Oregon, was one who was deeply impressed with Alaska's need. Through his efforts the urgent appeal was brought to Sheldon Jackson during the meeting of the General Assembly in 1877. Alaska was quite outside Jackson's field of responsibility, but it could not long remain outside his concern. He had been instructed during that summer to make a missionary journey into the northwest. When he reached Walla Walla he found that a revolt among the Indians would make it impossible to carry out the original plan for his trip. He therefore decided to go to Portland for conference with Dr. Lindsley and, if the way opened, to visit Alaska. He was encouraged in this by the fact that the Home Board had approved the opening of work in Alaska.

In Portland he found an old friend and former co-worker, Mrs. Amanda McFarland, the widow of the Reverend D. F. McFarland who, ten years before, had opened the first Presbyterian mission in New Mexico. It was at once decided that she should accompany Jackson to Alaska with the intention of establishing a Christian school. Of this trip he later wrote: "My trip, as far as Walla Walla, was in obedience to the direct instructions of the missionary secretary, concerning which I had no discretion. From Walla Walla to Portland, the trip was discretionary, and the secretary expected me to take it. From Portland to Alaska the trip was finally taken upon my own judgment, and at the earnest request of Dr. Lindsley and others interested in Alaska." One guesses that the "missionary secretary," though he had not directed the trip, could not have been overly surprised.

Jackson was now forty-three years of age and had had nearly twenty years of pioneering experience. There was nothing devious about him. He had learned to follow a straight course toward his objective and his objective now was to minister to Alaska. This was in 1877. It was not until 1884 that his commission from the board made any reference to Alaska and even then he was simply appointed as the missionary at

Sitka. For several years he continued in charge of work in the West. Then in 1882 he was moved to New York as editor of the *Presbyterian Home Missionary* (successor of the *Rocky Mountain Presbyterian*). Yet he managed to make repeated trips to Alaska, several times conducting parties of Church and public leaders to see for themselves the needs of the territory. On such a trip in 1879, with Drs. Kendall and Lindsley and their wives, the first Presbyterian Church in Alaska was organized at Fort Wrangell. Within a year after his first visit he raised over \$12,000 for the construction of a mission school. He brought continuous pressure to bear on Congress to provide a civil government and schools for the native population. The United States Commissioner of Education in his report for 1883 paid special tribute to this aspect of Jackson's work, noting that between 1878 and 1884 Jackson had delivered about 900 addresses on Alaska, including several before important educational groups whose help he enlisted in his effort. In 1884 he conducted a large party of educators to Alaska.

Having taken Mrs. McFarland to Alaska in the summer of 1877 and left her there alone with the most meager equipment and support, a circumstance that shocked many in the Church, Jackson saw to it that reenforcements arrived the next year and still others later. These all looked to him as the one on whom they could chiefly rely for help. In 1883 all the missionaries in Alaska joined in requesting the board to appoint him Superintendent of Missions in Alaska. This the board declined to do. However, the next year he was offered an appointment as missionary at Sitka. He promptly accepted and moved his family there in the summer. In September the Sitka Church was organized with forty-nine members. The boarding school was transferred from Fort Wrangell to Sitka and combined with Mrs. McFarland's school. In the same month the Presbytery of Alaska was organized.

Earlier in the year two other important events had happened. The first was the granting of his request for a government appropriation of \$15,000 for the enlargement of the industrial school at Sitka. The other, of far greater significance, was the passage in May 1884 of the act providing a civil gov-

ernment for Alaska and directing the Secretary of the Interior to make provision for the education of children of school age in the territory, with an appropriation of \$25,000 for this purpose. Early in 1885 this educational task was assigned to the Bureau of Education, whose Commissioner, General John Eaton, had known Jackson since 1878. General Eaton promptly offered Jackson the appointment as General Agent of Education in Alaska at a salary of \$1,200 a year. It was assumed that he could continue his missionary responsibilities, receiving an equal amount of salary from the Board of Home Missions. This type of arrangement was not unusual at this time in connection with educational work for Indians. Jackson accepted the appointment and plunged at once into a prodigiously difficult task.

It would, in fact, be almost impossible to exaggerate Jackson's difficulties. Concerning a really minor illustration, encountered in the erection of a building at Wrangell, Jackson wrote: "No one that has not tried building a thousand miles from a hardware store and a hundred miles from a sawmill, in a community where there was not a horse, wagon, or cart, and but one wheelbarrow, can realize the vexatious delays incipient to such a work." The native population was scattered over a vast territory. In southeastern Alaska, where the majority lived, the island communities could be reached only by water, which usually meant by canoe. The Eskimo settlements in western Alaska and along the Arctic Ocean constituted the most isolated and relatively inaccessible mission stations in the world.

V

It was Jackson's strategy—the only one that was feasible with the limited resources at his command—to relate the government schools as far as possible to the work of the various Church missions already established or soon to be established. To secure a wide distribution of missionary and educational efforts without any harmful competition, he worked out a comity plan with representatives of the Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, and Moravian

Churches. Other bodies, including the Roman Catholic Church, later cooperated with the government's school program. Among the more remote places where schools were established during the first few years were Cape Prince of Wales, Point Hope, and Point Barrow, the latter being the northernmost point on the continent. For these and other points Jackson recruited teachers from the states and found no lack of suitable applicants. From his limited government appropriation he provided materials for the erection of school buildings and homes, delivering workers and building materials to their destinations by the revenue cutter *Bear* or, when necessary, by chartered ship. He personally made five trips on the *Bear* to Point Barrow.

It was not only the obstacles interposed by distance, terrain, and weather that Jackson had to overcome. For sometime the human obstacles were equally formidable for there were men, some white and some Indian, who did not welcome the influence on the natives of mission or school. The first appointed civil officers resisted the missionary strenuously and had him arrested on a series of trumped-up charges. When the facts came to light, President Cleveland summarily removed these officers and appointed others. The charges against Jackson were dismissed. Later efforts of the same nature, including widespread attacks made on him in the metropolitan press, were exasperating but not more successful in discrediting him or diverting him from his objectives. He had powerful friends as well as bitter enemies.

Without question Jackson's most widely publicized achievement was the introduction of reindeer into Alaska. Nothing else that he accomplished so directly affected the economy of the territory and the material welfare of the population. On one of his trips to the Arctic coast he found the Eskimos in danger of starvation as a result of the unrestricted destruction of whales, walruses, and seals by American whalers. This deprived them of practically their only native source of food and clothing. At the same time he learned that the natives of Russian Siberia had in their herds of reindeer an unfailing supply of food and furs. His first proposals for the purchase

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and importation of reindeer were ridiculed as impracticable and his effort to secure government funds for this purpose was unsuccessful. He therefore raised from private sources enough money to purchase sixteen reindeer, which were successfully landed in Alaska in 1891. More were secured the same way the following year. By 1893 his judgment had been sufficiently vindicated so that Congress made a small appropriation for this purpose. In all, over twelve hundred reindeer were imported from Siberia before Russia prohibited further exportations in 1902. This number was augmented by others brought from Lapland and Norway. Within forty years the reindeer herds in Alaska numbered half a million, about seventy percent native-owned. Between 1891 and 1900 Jackson made thirty-three trips to Siberia in connection with this project.

In 1897 Sheldon Jackson was elected Moderator of the 109th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. His moderatorial year was typically Jacksonian. Upon adjournment, after a hurried trip to his home and office in Washington, D.C., he crossed the continent and took a ship to St. Michaels, Alaska, at the mouth of the Yukon River. He was here when a Yukon River steamer arrived with the cargo of gold dust that marked the real start of the Yukon gold rush. He then went by steamer on a missionary exploration the entire length of the Yukon to Dawson, Canada, a distance of over sixteen hundred miles. Returning, he was stranded for nineteen days on a sand bar. From St. Michaels he then sailed on the *Bear* to make the rounds of the mission stations and schools on the Bering Sea coast. This completed, he returned to Washington, where, shortly after, he was requested to go to Lapland as a special agent of the War Department to purchase reindeer to be sent to Alaska for the relief of miners stranded in the upper Yukon valley, who were reported to be in danger of starvation. This midwinter journey, in a year of exceptional storms, the return trip with over 500 reindeer and 68 Lapp herdsmen and their families, and their journey across the country and to Alaska, occupied Jackson fully until the end of April. Shortly thereafter he convened the General Assembly and preached

its opening sermon on his familiar text—"Begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit the land."

In 1902 he made his twenty-sixth and final voyage to Alaska. While he retained his official connection and continued to give active attention to Alaskan needs, seriously impaired health compelled him to confine himself to office work in Washington. He retired in 1908 and died the following year, May 2, 1909.

VI

This is the story of a missionary. He received many honors and won distinction in other fields. But this, one feels, is how he would have wished to be remembered—as a missionary. Of a truth his plans "required time and distance." From his first commission to his final retirement had passed a full fifty years, years of unbroken, unremitting missionary service. His missionary travels covered almost a million miles. This was in a day when the fastest one could travel was fifty miles an hour by train; but much of his travel was on foot, by stage coach, canoe, dog sled, or by a steamer bucking its way through ice fields. He knew danger. Three times he read his own obituary in the newspapers. As he spent his own time and strength, he inspired many others to spend theirs that the Church might be extended and the Gospel preached in far places. That was how he understood the Lord's command.

Such a story may seem unreal today. This was true pioneering. A trip to which Sheldon Jackson devoted weeks of the most severe physical strain could now be made in comparative ease in a matter of hours. Where he once spent days and weeks in stark isolation, his modern successor can be in constant communication with the far ends of the earth. Much of what to him was the commonplace of a day's work would now seem merely quaint. His circumstances are not ours, nor his problems, nor his methods; so we might say this is just something out of a storied past.

But this may be too hasty a conclusion. If we have plans to extend the Kingdom they may still "require time and dis-

tance." Every age has its own frontiers, its own edge of the unknown and of the unconquered, and it needs those who will go before to prepare the way. In our day as in his, the Church must be a moving Church, an exploring Church, a pioneering Church, a missionary Church.

Here was a man whose one thought of his ministry was as mission. He cheerfully performed all the chores that his ministry required of him—whether to write his thousands of letters, make his thousands of speeches, buttonhole congressmen, solicit money, drive nails into a new building, argue with boards and committees, put the fear of God into the hearts of his enemies. Whatever the chores, they could not obscure his sense of mission, which was strong enough to tie all these things together and give them a spiritual unity. This was not less real to him as the Church grew and prospered than it had been when it was weak and feeble. There was always some place further on that he must "begin to possess." A simple lesson but not easy to learn—it may be the lesson the Church chiefly needs to learn in our time.