



Eng^d by A. H. Ritchie

Matthew Lourie

MEMOIRS
OF THE
HON. WALTER LOWRIE

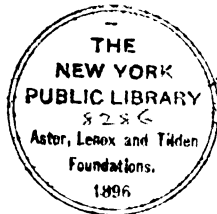
EDITED BY HIS SON
J. C. Lowrie

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FAREWELL COUNSELS—MISSION TO AFRICA.

THE Rev. Robert W. Sawyer and wife embarked for Western Africa, October 6, 1841. The usual instructions were addressed to them by Mr. Lowrie, secretary, in behalf of the Board:

DEAR FRIENDS. The work of a minister of Jesus Christ is the most momentous in which a human being can engage. The best qualified may exclaim with the apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things?" In every field of labour Divine assistance is needed; and especially so, when the call of God is to labour in the dark places of the earth, far away from the sustaining influences of the churches of the living God, and the company and fellowship of his ministers and people. You, dear brother, have just been ordained, by the proper judicatory of the church, acting in the Saviour's name and by his authority. You have been designated also by the agents of the church, to go far hence unto the Gentiles, to speak unto them that they may be saved; to call them away from their senseless idolatry, and to tell them of the only true God, and of the love of Jesus, and point them to Him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

One of the first sacrifices you are called to make is to part from your friends and relatives, from father and mother, from brothers and sisters, from those in whose company you have lived so long, that their endeared society has, in a manner, become a part

of your existence. This trial is so severe, so painful to flesh and blood, so desolating to the natural feelings of the heart, that many of God's professing people are unwilling to meet it. They cannot give up a beloved son, they cannot thus part for life with a beloved daughter. But the cause of Christ requires this sacrifice, severe and painful as it is ; and when the Saviour's glory is concerned, and the eternal interests of perishing men, these light afflictions which are but for a moment ought not to be even named.

By your own free choice, and with the approbation and sanction of the Executive Committee, Western Africa has been selected as the field of your future labours. A beloved brother has just fallen in that field, and you have been appointed to supply his place. This circumstance throws a more than ordinary degree of solemnity over our present meeting. It is a serious thing to be thus baptised for the dead. But may we not hope that in as much as your appointment has been made, after much prayer to God for his direction, it will meet with his approbation.

Every field of missionary labour has obstacles to the efforts of the church and discouragements peculiar to itself. In some "the man of sin opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or is worshipped ; so that He as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that He is God." In others, the exterminating spirit of the false prophet suspends the sword over every one that turns to the light. Others, again, are prevented by an ignorant despotism from hearing the truth ; and, in others, is the influence of unhealthy climates. This last is the

case with Western Africa ; and this obstacle is a serious one. Every branch of the Church which has engaged in missionary labours there, has found it so. In deciding, therefore, on what is duty, we are called to examine the subject in the light of God's word, and of His providence ; and above all, to look to Him for wisdom and direction.

The first question to be examined is, shall this field be abandoned, the missionaries now there withdrawn, and the benighted inhabitants, excluded from the efforts of the Church, be left to perish in ignorance and sin ?

Let it be admitted, that to plant the Church in Africa, will cause the death of some of God's servants. If we take the example of the apostles for our guidance, we will not find in this a sufficient reason for leaving the millions in this country in the unmolested possession of Satan. It cost Stephen and James their lives to witness for the Saviour at Jerusalem ; and Paul was " ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." In view of the bonds and afflictions which everywhere waited for him, he could say, " But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." It were easy to multiply examples of the sufferings of the apostles and first Christians, in their labours to build up the church. In no instance did the fear of death deter them from preaching the glorious gospel of the Son of God. They were influenced by His Spirit, and acted in view of His high and holy example. " Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down

His life for us ; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

There is a tendency in some minds to draw an inference against the missiody work from the death of a missionary, which is not thought of in the death of a minister among the churches at home. But this position will not bear examination. Within a few months, how large has been the number of beloved brethren, most of them in the prime of life, who have been called home from their labours ; yet no one infers from these dispensations of Divine providence, that it is not the duty of the church to use every means to supply their places. Nay, all agree, that for this purpose, increased efforts, and increased prayer to the Lord of the harvest, together with a deeper humility and repentance for her unfaithfulness become the special duty of the church in these seasons of rebuke and affliction. These principles apply in all their force to the death of our dear brethren in the foreign field ; and the church is not at liberty to apply one rule of duty in regard to her ministers at home, and another rule to her ministers abroad. The word of God makes no such distinction, the field for her agency is the world. Although there be a risk to human life, in sending to benighted Africa the knowledge of the Saviour, his commission, the spirit that was in Him, and the example of His apostles require it to be done. In thus engaging in the Lord's work, the Church is not making experiments ; she is but obeying the command of the Saviour ; and if she persevere in carrying out His commission, her success is just as certain as that her Redeemer rose from the dead. The redemption of Ethiopia, and her inbringing to the fold of Christ are

in the purpose of God ; and her very name is mentioned in His glorious promise. "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God." Ps. lxxvii. 31. Now the word of God is explicit, that His purposes of love and mercy, and all His promises shall be fulfilled by the use of the appointed means. By the preaching of the gospel all nations shall be brought to the knowledge of the Saviour ; and Africa, though long oppressed and trampled under foot, with her benighted and degraded people, shall, by the blessing of God, on this, His appointed agency, be brought to the light and liberty of the children of God.

As the constitution of coloured men can endure the climate of Africa better than white men, the question may be asked, Why not commit the entire work to them ? The answer to this is, that we have not got suitable and qualified men of this class to take the charge of this important work. If it be left to them, the efforts to bless this benighted people must for the present be postponed. Hence the absolute necessity of educated and qualified white men.

But although the agency of white men cannot at first be dispensed with, it is not required that the whole missionary work be done by them. On the contrary, there is so much that from the first can be done by qualified assistants, that even with an equal number of them the force of the mission would be doubled. Hence it is the part of wisdom to employ the agency of coloured men, as far as their qualifications will permit. At present, teachers and assistants of this class can be obtained ; others of higher attainments, men of piety and zeal for this great work, will in time be prepared, both in this country and among the natives, to take the burden of the missionary

work in Africa on themselves; so that the blessings of the gospel will be carried to this benighted land chiefly by the agency of her own children.

The whole of the Western coast, from Sierra Leone to the Sinoe River, had long been the mart of the slave trade. First the British, and then the American colonies arrested its progress on large sections of the coast; but it was only within the last year that the slave factories at the Gallinos and New Cess were broken up. The whole country back of these colonies has been the seat of this murderous traffic, which to a large extent still continues. The part of the coast lying between the Sinoe River and Cape Palmas, and occupied by the Kroos, the Grand Sesters, and the Grebos, has, for the most part, escaped this dreadful scourge. No missionary has ever resided among the Kroos, or the Grand Sesters on the coast, or any of the tribes behind them. The first station for the mission must, from the state of the country, be on the coast. Every tribe in that region is most anxious to have missionaries to reside among them.

The Kroos living on the coast claim to be first supplied before they will permit a station among their neighbors more inland, who are equally desirous of missionaries with themselves. In a short time we hope to have another station, on the highlands in the Waw country, leaving the station on the coast in the charge of the coloured members of the mission. This point gained, we have good reason to believe that the health of our brethren will not suffer materially from the climate in the interior; and that we may then look forward to the permanent continuance of the mission without more than ordinary risk

to the health and life of the brethren sent from among ourselves.

By our last accounts from Africa, the mission family now there had passed safely through the first attack of fever, which is always the most dangerous, and which, in this instance, proved fatal to one of the brethren. The vessel that takes you out, carries also a house prepared to be set up, and large enough to accommodate two families. The vessel will touch at Cape Palmas, and it is arranged, that Mr. Canfield will proceed to the Kroo country, taking assistants with him to set up the house when the materials are landed. A boat will also be sent with you sufficiently large to run between the station and either of the colonies. It will most likely be best for you to remain at Cape Palmas until the building at Settra Kroo is ready to receive you, or even longer, if that be deemed best by yourself and the brethren there.

Whilst it is the duty of the church, and of all her judicatories and her Board of Foreign Missions, as well as of all her missionaries, while labouring for the spread of the gospel, to mature the best plans for carrying forward the work, it is equally the duty of all to contemplate with awe and reverence, and with deep humility, the Divine sovereignty, and to acknowledge in all things the overruling providence of God. Without His approval every plan and counsel, however wise to human view, will be turned to foolishness and disappointment. It becomes us, then, to look to the word of God for direction, and to follow the example of His servants as therein recorded for our instruction. It is worthy of our imitation how frequently the apostle to the Gentiles, though commissioned by the Saviour himself, and living for

His glory, and labouring more abundantly than all others, refers, in all his plans and purposes, to the will of the Lord. "I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, if God will." Acts xviii. 21. "Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey, by the will of God to come unto you." Rom. i. 10. "That I may come unto you with joy, by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." Rom. xv. 32. "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will." 1 Cor. iv. 19. "For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit." 1 Cor. xvi. 7. "And this will we do, if God permit." Heb. vi. 3.

Such also was the practice of the prophets. "And the king said unto Zadoc, carry back the ark of God into the city; if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again and shew me both it and its habitation. But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good to him." 2 Sam. xv. 25-26.

"Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little ones; and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way; because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him; but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him. So we fasted and besought our God for this; and He was entreated of us." Ezra viii. 21-23.

“Who is he that saith and it cometh to pass when the the Lord commandeth it not.” Lam. iii. 37.

“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou ?” Dan. iv. 35. In everything we do, therefore, in the Saviour’s service, it becomes us to act under the influence of these solemn truths, and in all our proposed measures, follow the example of the prophets and apostles, saying, *If the Lord will.*

In contemplating your field of labour, whilst we would not disguise from you, nor from ourselves, that it is of more than ordinary peril to life and health, still it is not required that you go there with the spirit of a martyr ; but with the spirit of a missionary of the cross, whose wish and desire is to labour in the Saviour’s cause, as long as the Saviour sees good to prolong your life and health. If there be danger in this field, there is also great need of labourers. Generation after generation of immortal beings are there living and dying under the cruel dominion of Satan. There is a people for whom every thing remains to be done, a people who have had a double portion of the wormwood and the gall.

Let us pause a moment to consider and weep over the complications of evil and oppression which trample this people in the dust. First, the blasting influence of the slave trade, extending over a great part of the western coast, breaking up every bond of society, arraying the different communities against each other, and making it the interest of every man to quarrel with his neighbour, that he may betray and sell him to the man-stealer and the pirate. Next the despot-

ism and oppression of their rulers, by which almost the whole community are reduced to slavery, and subjected to the caprice, avarice and cruelty of those who ought to protect and cherish them. Then comes their miserable and unprincipled priesthood, their fetish men, their witch-finders, their devil-men, their rain-makers, with all their train of debasing and cruel forms of worship, and low unmeaning idolatry. We turn to the darker shades of the picture, and there we find poor, degraded woman. No plague spot so deep as this. Here is half the community, the mothers of the rising generation, brutalized, and doomed to the most abject depression, where all are depressed and wretched. But the darkest shade still remains to be considered, and that is the closing scene. To them no ray of light breaks across the thick darkness that rests upon the grave. Death is to them a most dreaded and most dreadful enemy, and from his approach they shrink with terror and despair to the last. Nor is this to be wondered at, for he comes to them in unknown terrors. The love of a dying Saviour has never reached their ears; the message of mercy, of pardon for sin, of peace with God, has never been sent to them. They have lived in the region and shadow of death, and they die surrounded with terror and remorse, with every prospect shrouded in the darkness of the tomb. O, how much this people need the knowledge of that remedy which has the promise of this life and that which is to come. How emphatically to them would the message of the gospel be good-tidings of great joy!

And now, dear brother and sister, the providence of God has opened the way for you to engage in the great work which brought the Saviour to our world.

No privations or sufferings of His followers can equal His while fulfilling His Divine mission. The trials you may be called to endure, cannot be compared with His in the garden of Gethsemane, when His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Should you even be called to an early death, it will not compare with His on the cross, and His contest there with the powers of darkness. You may indeed be called "to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, in your flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church;" but even then, you have His blessed promise, that "he will never leave you nor forsake you." You will find it profitable, and so will all His followers, to review and meditate upon the terms of discipleship, as laid down by our Lord Himself. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple to be as his master, and the servant to be as his lord. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. He that taketh not up his cross and followeth not after me, is not worthy of me. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me."

Just as you live under the influence of these requirements, will you find the sustaining presence of the Saviour. Should it be the will of God that your constitution can bear the climate to which you go, there never was a brighter prospect of usefulness than is now before you. Dark and waste and dreary as are the moral desolations of the people to whom you are sent, there is not, perhaps, anywhere a more interest-

ing field of missionary labour ; and as far as the inhabitants are concerned, one that is more encouraging. They are found to be of a teachable disposition, and many of them affectionate and confiding ; and when brought to the knowledge of the truth, consistent and orderly professors of the name of Christ. Among the tribes on the coast, and those immediately inland, there is a great field of labour and much work to be done ; but our Master's vineyard lies also beyond all these, stretching far into the interior, and indeed embracing every tribe and people, whether wandering in the deserts, dwelling in cities, or solitary places, in the bosom of the forests, or on the banks of the lakes and rivers. All these are included in the command of the Saviour to the Church, and all these are included in his purposes of love and mercy. The way is fully open to commence the missionary work among them ; and the progress of the truth from tribe to tribe, will still further and further prepare the way of the Lord, till the good news shall reach the most remote and obscure corner of the land.

Go forward, then, dear friends, without despondency. Present duty is our concern, and results belong to God. Live near the blessed Saviour. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning ; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." In the prayers of God's people we trust you will not be forgotten ; and whilst in the name of the Church we bid you God speed, whilst we say farewell, we would with adoring reverence commend you to the care and keeping of the living God ; and may his grace, mercy and peace be with you ! Amen.