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THE SOCIETY OF MISSIONARY INQUIRY.

1818—Centennial Celebration—1918.

The celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Society of Missionary Inquiry is one of the notable events in the history of Union Theological Seminary. It is impossible to convey to the printed page all of the information and inspiration which was brought to us during the four days through which the program extended. But we feel that we owe to the future to preserve in printed form as many of the addresses delivered on that occasion as we can. It has been possible for us to secure in written form all of the addresses but three, and we are taxing our space to the utmost limit in order to include all the manuscripts which have come into our hands. With the exception of the book department this whole issue is given over to the Centennial Addresses.

Below will be found an exact copy of the program which was planned for the Centennial. This program was carried out as printed with the exception that the last speaker, President Charles W. Dabney, LL. D., of the University of Cincinnati, found it impossible at the last moment to be present. This was a matter of great regret to us, as there are so many ties that bind Dr. Dabney to Union Seminary. All of the sermons and addresses were of an unusually high order and produced an impression upon the hearers which will not be soon forgotten.

SAMUEL NORVELL LAPSLEY.

BY THE REV. J. M. WELLS, D. D.,

Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, N. C.

There is a glamour that distance lends. We read of the brilliant young missionaries of other churches and of other lands. Their faith gleams bright. Their consecration shows complete. Their ability, their zeal, their energy, seem wonderful. And yet we have sent out from this society missionaries just as brilliant, just as heroic, just as consecrated.

I will not speak of the living—such scholars as Reynolds, such heroes as Martin, and many others. But I would remind you of some who have laid aside their armor.

Of Lindley, the great pioneer missionary to southern Africa, who led Paul Kruger to Christ as one of the bi-products of his work.

Of Thornton Sampson, brilliant and versatile, who passed unscathed through all his missionary trials and dangers, finally to lay down his life amidst the gorges of our own Rockies.

Of gentle Charlie Morton, so quiet and so courteous, who laid down his life for the neglected Continent, dying under the Southern Cross.

Of O. B. Wilson, giving his life for the hardest of all missions, perhaps, that to Africa in America, and who was not, for God took him, not with the chariot of fire, but with his thunderbolt of lightning.

Of W. M. Junkin, high-strung, sensitive, noble, who joined in the founding of our Korean Mission, who built his very life's blood into the structure builded there, and from there has gone home to glory.

But especially to-night I would ask you to consider with me that one of your number whose life was the most brilliant and whose work the most wonderful of all your heroes of the faith, who, enduring as seeing Him who is invisible, have already

entered into the recompense of their reward. I ask you to study with me the life and character of Samuel Norvell Lapsley.

In 1866, on April 14th, in Selma, Alabama, a son was born to one of the best families of that cultured and refined old town. His father was a lawyer, afterwards a distinguished jurist, himself the son of a minister. His mother, the daughter of a minister, was beautiful of life and wise and gentle of speech. Good blood flowed in the child's veins. Scotch-Irish blood from the Valley of Virginia, strong and true, flowed there. Scotch blood was there of no lesser strain than that from the veins of old Samuel Rutherford of the Westminster Assembly, whose "Letters" have blessed every generation since they were written. New England blood of the finest literary taste, and truest learning, was there. And these stronger strains were sweetened and softened by English blood of the real Cavalier strain, loyalist to the core.

He was a child of the covenant. From his mother he "learned his earliest lessons of entire devotion to God and duty" through "her beautiful life and gentle and wise words" which were "an inspiration ever inciting and guiding him into a life of consecration." From his father he learned the keen sense of honor of the old South, the high ethical ideals of a lawyer of the old school, the bravery of a soldier of the Lost Cause, and the righteousness and integrity of the highest type of a Presbyterian elder.

Such training very early led him to Christ, and at ten years of age he was received into the communion of the Selma church. When twelve years old, he aided an aunt in a Sunday school for the negroes at the country home of the family, leading in prayer, speaking to the school, and otherwise serving as superintendent.

His progress at school was rapid, and his advantages good. At fifteen he entered the University of Alabama. At eighteen he graduated with the highest honors. During his stay there he organized the Y. M. C. A. at the University; served as cadet captain of one of the companies; and was an assistant professor during his senior year. The University President testified of him that no abler or better student had graduated there in twenty years.

For a year he taught at the University. He declined re-elec-

tion fearing that the scholastic ease and intellectual delights of his position might draw him away from the ministry, to which he had now dedicated his life.

In 1885 he entered Union Theological Seminary, then at Hampden-Sidney, Virginia. Here he sat at the feet of a notable group of men. Dr. B. M. Smith, that great soul and mighty power in the life of the Seminary, was beginning to lay aside his active work in Oriental Literature. To his assistance had just been called a young man of splendid scholarship and brilliant personality, whose bow still abides in strength as the distinguished President of the Seminary. In the chair of Theology, as the successor of the great Dabney, taught Dr. T. E. Peck "with a wealth of learning, a saintliness of influence, and a perspicuity and power of statement which have never been surpassed here." The Professor of New Testament Interpretation was Dr. Henry C. Alexander, "an accomplished scholar and golden-hearted gentleman," in erudition worthy of the great name he bore. Dr. James Fair Latimer had but recently entered upon the work of the Chair of Church History. A man four-square, of wide practical experience and rugged intellectual honesty, he was giving himself to the work with an intensity that seemed to realize the few years of service that were to be left him. Under these men beneath the scholastic shades of old Hampden-Sidney, he began his theological training for his life work.

In his class here were two others who gave themselves to the work of Foreign Missions, and several who have attained eminence and success in other departments of the Master's work.

As to the influence of your honored society upon his choice of the Foreign field as his field, I am unable to say. Doubtless it had its part in leading him to his great decision.

During his stay at the Seminary the outstanding thing about the man seems to have been his zeal in personal work for souls. With unflagging interest he sought out the lost everywhere in the vicinity that he might win them for Christ.

His course was interrupted by a year spent at home teaching. During the summer of 1886 he had preached at Decatur. While teaching at home he supplied the Second Church of Birmingham and during the summer of 1887 gave all his time to that church.

Everywhere he gave himself with tireless energy to the Master's work.

He completed his seminary course at McCormick Seminary in Chicago, going there that he might be brought into touch with the life, the needs and the work of a great city. There he made many and close friends, and under the able faculty of the great seminary laid a broad and enduring foundation.

In the spring of 1889 he returned to Anniston, Alabama, to which place his family had moved. Here he spent the summer and fall in work among the spiritually neglected at Glen Addie and West Anniston. The organization of a church and the winning for Christ of some sixty souls were the visible fruits of a work that left a lasting impress upon those communities.

Ever since the organization of the Southern Presbyterian Church the mind and heart of the Church had been turned toward Africa as a field for missionary effort. In 1865, probably through the influence of Dr. J. Leighton Wilson, the great pioneer to Africa, who was then our Secretary of Foreign Missions, the Executive Committee had been authorized to open work there. Again in 1881 the same action had been taken by the General Assembly, but in neither case had the way been clear. In 1889 the General Assembly of our Church received overtures from several quarters asking for the establishment of such a mission. The following answer was made:

"In answer to an overture from the professors of the Tuscaloosa Institute and others, it was resolved that the Executive Committee be instructed to establish a Mission in the Dark Continent as speedily as practicable."

When the General Assembly authorized the mission in 1889, a call was sent out for volunteers.

Lapsley had been inclined to the work of Foreign Missions. His heart had been drawn to Africa as the most needy field in the world. After mature and prayerful consideration he wrote to the Committee on August 5, 1889, saying to them:

"I hereby ask to be sent by your Committee as your missionary to the Congo Valley, in Africa. I do so because it is my desire and conviction that I should preach Christ to the

heathen, and for several reasons I want to go to Africa, if God and the Church permit me."

The Committee decided to open the work in Africa.

They appointed Rev. Samuel Norvell Lapsley and Rev. Wm. H. Sheppard, a colored minister who was a graduate of Tuskegee Institute, as the first missionaries, and directed them to leave as soon as practicable for their new field, and to open up the work there. Thus these two were to go out together—the one the son of a former slave holder, of the best blood of the aristocratic Old South; the other the son of a former slave, only a few generations removed from those for whom he should labor. But both were men of faith, men of power, men of burning zeal, ready to give their strength and to lay down their lives for their Lord Jesus Christ. Truly in him "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

Together they visited the churches. Great congregations heard them in Selma, Anniston, Birmingham, Nashville, Louisville and Washington. Everywhere they made a profound impression. The President gave them a private interview in the White House. The Secretary of State furnished them with letters to our Ministers abroad. The mission offices of the Presbyterian Church North and the Congregational Church gave them advice and information of the greatest value. Lapsley's Presbytery had ordained him on December 4th, 1889, and all was ready for their departure.

On February 26th, 1890, when the *Adriatic* sailed from New York, Lapsley and Sheppard stood together, waving their farewells to their friends; and the former looking for the last time upon his native land.

Time fails me to tell of their voyage, and of their stay in London. Here they secured that true friend for the mission, the merchant prince, Mr. Robert Whyte, who proved, as their business representative in London, of incalculable value.

From London they went to Brussels. Here through the influence of Senator Morgan, Judge Lapsley's law partner, they were introduced to those in authority, and even to King Leopold, whose hands were not yet darkened with the vile stain of "Red

Rubber." They were received with the greatest kindness and seem to have made valuable friends for the work.

On April 16th they sailed from Rotterdam on the steamship *Afrikaan* and on May 9th reached the mouth of the Congo. What emotions must have thrilled them as they gazed upon that mighty river! Its dark, tea-colored water discolored the waters of the ocean, being a fit symbol of the great darkness from which it came. The banks clothed with forests of dark mangrove trees, dense creepers, low fern-like palms and high feather-duster ones, formed a rich background against the encircling hills.

They first disembark at Banana. Here Lapsley has his first narrow escape, being attacked by a shark while swimming in the surf. From Banana they pass on up to Boma, the capital of the Congo Free State.

From Boma they pass to Underhill. Here he is entertained at the Baptist Missionary Station. Here he has his first attack of African fever. Here he tenderly writes: "A little back in the hollow of the hill are the graves of the men who pioneered this work—a sacred spot." Doubly sacred it was to become later on.

On June 17th, 1890, they start upon their 230-mile tramp to Stanley Pool. The railroad that now goes around the great falls of the Congo, had not then been built. Every step must be walked. The trail led over mountains, through torrents, rough, narrow, hard, while over them the fierce equatorial sun blazed down.

After a week of such travel they reach Lukunga—the halfway house. Here they rest for a few days, and then on over the same rough mountainous trail to Leopoldville or Stanley Pool. Here the mighty Congo pauses before its first leap down the mighty series of cataracts known as Stanley Falls. The Pool is some twenty-five miles long by nine miles broad. It is dotted with grassy islands, and is said to be a rarely beautiful body of water.

Here they are welcomed by the missionaries of other churches, and here they make headquarters until they finally locate their station.

From this point they make various journeys of exploration. Lapsley, after eleven days, goes to Bolobo, a five-days' trip up the Congo, to consult the great missionary explorer, Rev.

George Grenfell, as to the best location for their mission; while Sheppard remains at Stanley Pool and spends much of his time hunting hippopotami, thirty-six of which he kills there. Lapsley was absent up the Congo for nearly two months. Much time was then spent and several short trips taken to secure boatmen for a long trip up the tributaries of the Congo to the south. Here they hope to find a suitable location.

On December 4th they start on this journey, going by steamboat to a point near the mouth of the Kassai. Two large canoes are secured. Seventeen boatmen are hired. An abundance of barter goods and some food are put on board; and on December 24th they enter the Kassai for their long voyage.

Time fails me to tell of their adventurous trip, one of the most exciting parts of his African experiences. We follow them up the Kassai, then into the Kwango and finally into and up the Duma. Hundreds of miles are traveled. Almost every mile is filled with adventure and danger. Now they are in danger from the natives, not yet conquered by the State. Now their camp is endangered from a roving elephant. Again, great herds of hippopotami attack the canoes and with difficulty are kept off. Storms burst upon them, bringing danger on the water and discomfort on the land. And with it all the ever-present danger of African fever, two attacks of which Lapsley has during this trip. Far up the Duma they go, finding the land low, flat and unsuited to their settlement, and then back to Stanley Pool.

Short trips are taken to secure men, and then on March 17th they start by steamboat on a voyage that is to end at Luebo. Up the Congo they go, into the Kassai, by the mouth of the Kwango, past the low isolated peak known as Mt. Pogge, on past the mouth of the Lvange River, past the Sankuru into the Lulua. And then where the little Luebo runs into the Lulua and the falls of the latter are a barrier to further navigation, they find the ideal site for their station. They reach Luebo on April 18th, 1891. I need not tell you the details of the founding of the station. Suffice to say they secure the land; buy and build native houses; clear yards and fields; plant fruit trees; and here on the summit of the beautiful slope leading down to the river, begin Luebo Station.

Lapsley quickly makes friends with the State officials and traders located here.

From here they go on various trips of exploration. Sheppard goes to Wissman Falls on the Kassai and then to Bena Siam. Lapsley takes a trip full of interest and some danger, to Lulua-burg. He returns with cattle, goats, sheep, and many natives who desire to settle at Luebo. From Sheppard's vivid book, "Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo," we take this striking description of his return. "How happy we were when a runner announced Mr. Lapsley's arrival. With the big ivory horn blowing and the drums beating, we ran down the banana walk to greet and welcome him home. He was tired, worn and weary and walked with a limp. He had been scorched by the sun, beaten by the rains, and torn by the thorns; his coat was in tatters, and his last pair of shoes worn into holes; but through all this he had that heavenborn smile as he said, 'Sheppard, how are you? I am glad to see you.' "

Nine months had been spent at Luebo. Months of foundation laying they were. The insidious African fever had repeatedly attacked Lapsley. Both missionaries felt that a trip down the river would do him much good. Besides there was trouble about the title to their property at Leubo. So it was decided that Lapsley should go down to Boma. He left on January 5th, 1892.

Stanley Pool was reached on January 14th, 1892. From there he went to Underhill on March 12th, and on to Boma on March 17th. His business with the Governor-General was satisfactorily settled, and the titles to the property at Luebo fully and finally settled. He returned to Underhill on March 19th.

The next day he was seized with the African hematuric fever.

In spite of all treatment and the most tender nursing, he rapidly grew worse. On March the 26th the young soldier of the cross passed to his reward. Twenty-six years old, how much he had achieved! As the letter that told of his death said, "We laid our brother's body to rest on Sunday morning, in our little cemetery among the trees down by the river side, where sleep quite a number of our brethren 'until he come'."

When I come to speak of this man's character, I am reminded

first and foremost of his true modesty. No fulsome eulogy would be pleasing to him.

1st. Let me speak of the goodness of the man.

His was a sublime *faith*. A child of the covenant, he had never known what it was not to trust Christ. He knew whom he had believed. Whether pleading with the shop workers of this land or arguing with the cultivated Belgian sceptic in Africa, his feet were planted on a firm foundation. His was a cheerful Christian *optimism*. No gloom shrouded his life or darkened his disposition. Bright, cheerful, a lover of humor, a lover of music, he brightened every circle in which he was placed. Little wonder that Dr. Sims wrote: "I dearly loved your son, and regard him as a real martyr. I warned him to go home, but he wished to complete a definite work before that. Too much goodness for his strength."

2nd. Let me speak of the greatness of the man. And here I weigh my words well.

He was great in kindling the love of his people of the South for the African. A dark chapter is that Reconstruction chapter in our history. Embittered by misgovernment, dishonesty and fraud the people of the South, that had felt a genuine affection for the child race thrust upon them, were coming to hate it. The chasm between the races was growing broader and deeper. And then this brilliant scion of the South, his heart pulsating with the love of Jesus Christ for all men, went throughout the South with this negro; sailed across the ocean with him; went into the heart of Africa with him, to save his race; and did more to bring love in place of hate into the hearts of the Southern people than any man has ever done.

He was great in seizing promptly the strategic point in the Congo State for our Church. He went far enough inland to be almost free of the deadly coast fever. He went to one of the highest altitudes in all the State, where health conditions would be the best. He went just to the head of navigation, where supplies could be carried at the minimum of expense. He went among a higher grade of people than those on the coast. He located at a point where four great peoples met, and from

which all these could be reached. Promptly he seized upon just the right location for our work.

He was great in realizing at once the need of reinforcements from other churches. It was his purpose to strive to enlist the Northern Presbyterian Church and Methodist Churches in adjacent work—a plan that has finally been carried out in the work of Bishop Lambuth.

He was great as a linguist, in so rapidly grasping the language and beginning the work that has so splendidly been done since by Morrison.

He was great as a diplomat, securing what he sought, and winning all with whom he came in contact, whether native chief, trader, or official.

He was great in what he was and what he did—and the Lord called him home at twenty-six.

3rd. Let me speak of the death of the man. Many of us recall the thrill that went through the Church when the news came: Lapsley is dead. When Dr. Houston, the Secretary of Foreign Missions, announced his death to the General Assembly then in session, the whole Assembly was moved, and many wept. Lapsley had looked forward to this as possible, nay probably, but he never wavered. He wrote to the Assembly's Committee: "I do not expect, in the natural course of events, to be taken from my work just now by death, yet it is certainly a possibility which I must, as a practical man, warn you to provide for liberally." He wrote to his mother: "I am never homesick, not even when a little unwell. But I think now of two trips, one to you all in a few years—not more than four likely—from reaching here; another to a lasting home, which I hope to reach after a good deal of work I was sent here for." And at the end he said: "Bless my father and mother. Please tell them I go home to be with Jesus, where I wish to meet them. I am sorry for my poor Mission, but they will find a better man. Say good-bye to all my relatives and friends."

Why did God take away the worker? Why does God ever take away the worker here in the morning of his strength? God knows. When young McCall of the Livingstone-Kongo Mission lay dying, his last words were these: "Lord, I gave

myself, body, mind and soul to Thee. I consecrated my whole life and being to Thy service, and now, if it please Thee to take myself, instead of the work which I would do for Thee, what is that to me? Thy will be done!" And when young Golaz, of the French Mission to Senegambia, was dying he said: "Do not be discouraged if the first laborers fall in the field. Their graves will mark the way for their successors, who will march by them with great strides."

4th. But if his death be a mystery, his life was a great beacon. It was so when he died. Rowbotham on his way to Africa wrote: "This news made us, by the help of God, more in earnest and more determined to go forward and take up that work which God had begun in Mr. Lapsley's death." And a splendid band, walking in the light of that life, have gone bravely forward to win our part of Africa for Christ. What hath God wrought since, largely as the result of the inspiration of that life?

Four stations are there instead of one.

Three hundred and fifty-six out-stations spread the light.

Fifty-one foreign workers break the bread of life to them.

Fifteen thousand six hundred and seventy-four communicants have accepted Christ as Lord and Master, and been received into the Church.

Two thousand six hundred and seventy-two were added to the Church last year.

Four hundred and fifty-seven native workers carry the gospel far and wide in the heart of the Dark Continent.

Three hundred and thirty-eight Sunday schools, attended by thirty-two thousand, seven hundred and seventy-five pupils, are training for the future.

There are day schools with fifteen thousand nine hundred and thirty-four students.

And there are one hundred and sixty candidates for the ministry.

What hath God wrought!

Lapsley is living here to-day—living in the love of our Presbyterians for Africa and the Africans—living in the students from every class of this great Seminary that offer themselves for Africa. Out on the banks of the Congo is that grave

covered with Virginia creeper. It is calling you men to Africa, to win it for Christ. Up yonder the soul of Samuel Norvell Lapsley looks down from glory. There he still is living and serving God.

"They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in His temple."