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"ONE OF GOD'S GREATEST ENGLISHMEN."

AN APPRECIATION.

BY THE REV. T. E. EDMOND, M.A., Vicar of St. John's,
Birkenhead.

TO attempt to write the Life of One of God's Greatest Englishmen is to emulate the impossible. To endeavour the portrayal of this glorious adventurer's life is to face glaring insufficiency. To summarize this faithful soldier's magnetic career is beyond the power of words. To imitate a living picture of this genius in all its surprises is to invite the tongue of scorn. To pen a true description of the amazing personality, the unconquerable spirit of this mighty scholar is to find words and time and space totally inadequate. To refer you to the existing biographies, and in particular, to the most recent, written by a living relation, is easier. Let the reward of this effort be to inspire you to a more careful study of the marvellous genius and simple faith of one of God's greatest Englishmen—WILLIAM CAREY.

The diary of one John Ryland reads: "On Oct. 5th, 1783, I baptized in the Name a poor journeyman shoemaker, little thinking that before nine years had elapsed, he would prove the first instrument for forming a society for sending missionaries from England, and much less, that, later, he would become a professor of languages in an Oriental college, and a translator of the Scriptures into eleven different tongues." Thus in humble ways of life God pursues His purpose to mould men for His service. In the by-paths and main roads He watches with unerring eyes for the willing and faithful in heart to become His messengers. A young staff officer of the British Army in India, sitting next to Carey at the table of the Governor-General in Delhi, rudely and contemptuously asked him, if he had not once been a shoemaker. "No," said Carey, "not even a shoemaker, sir, but just a cobbler."

There are those in our day who unwisely manifest their distaste for the preaching office of the ministry. Dr. Percy Dearmer in a recent work has deplored the empty pew and declared his conviction that as men have never been preached into church they will not be preached back. I venture in the face of so great an authority to assert that this is lamentably false reading of history. The record of the Christian Church is the thrilling story of the triumphs of the Word faithfully proclaimed by consecrated voices. A large number of the great movements in the world have originated in a discourse. At any rate, let us be sure of this, by a sermon sown as the seed into a century, potent with new ideas and new expansions, William Carey startled the Christian world into the birth of Christian missions. There has hardly been a sermon

preached in modern days which has had so distinct and traceable an effect on Protestant Christianity throughout the world.

I read a little while ago a minister’s admissions of the sermons he had never preached. One subject he had left untouched was “ God’s Ministry of Surprise.” I have read carefully the details of the lives of our hero and his three friends and find myself still in a condition of helpless astonishment at the extraordinary versatility of the Divine operation. Every canon of ordinary procedure in this story seems broken. Their very infringement serves to enhance the marvellous courage and amazing fortitude of our hero ; but it is worth our detailed attention to note the channels of God’s movement towards the world’s redemption. William Carey, village cobbler, wedded to an illiterate wife, on the route to India with wife and family and infant, one month old, in company, and under the sole tutelage of Thomas, the eccentric genius, who was pursued by his creditors, even in Cowes roads, as the ship waited to carry them to India !! William Carey, thrown into a land about which he knew nothing, into the midst of unfriendly English and indifferent natives, to learn the secrets of indigo growing, and to find a way through illness and want to the heart of India !! William Carey, starving in the wilds of the Sundarbans, penniless, to face ten months before the coming of funds from England !!

“ Enlarge thy tents. Stretch forth thy curtains. Lengthen thy cords. Expect greater things from God. Attempt greater things for God. Dare a bolder programme. Dwell in an ampler world.” Did ever a preacher practise his precepts more than William Carey ? Courage is a quality to be admired with unstinted praise. The prospect to the young man as the merchantman drew away from the shores of England was lit with a divine sunshine, radiant upon an adventure of high faith just begun. The supreme courage of the man is illustrated at the time of starvation and danger, when he writes home to the Committee : “ I would not renounce my undertaking for the world. I hope the Society will keep its eye towards Africa and Asia.” This astounding optimism came not from shallow observation, but from deep-seated faith, for his diary, January 17th, 1793, reads : “ Towards evening felt the all-sufficiency of God, which much relieved my mind. I walked home and was able to cast all my cares on Him.”

The turning-point in Carey’s life came, when he received the appointment of Professor at Fort William College. From this stage the stupendous labours of his life began. Here we begin to catch a glimpse of the rising glory of Serampore, of which Dr. Smith says, “ The whole history of Christian missions knows no grander chapter.” The Carey family moved to Serampore in 1820, and soon, in association with the Marshmans, the Brunsdons and Ward, schools were founded for high- and low-caste children. In a communal settlement, founded upon Moravian principles, six missionary families segregated themselves to found the Kingdom of God in Bengal. Every Saturday evening they held a meeting

to settle differences and to regulate family concerns. Concealment of hurt was regarded as a crime ; furtherance of the Missionary enterprise was the sole nexus of their association. The members of the family itinerated in preaching tours and found it like ploughing the sand. Chaplain Brown assured them that God's time for the conversion of Bengal had not yet come. Carey wrote : " I am almost grown callous and am tempted to preach as if their hearts were invulnerable." Confessedly, their hands were pitifully empty. Carey was painfully learning the truth that although God had called him young, the race over which he yearned was very old. Thus wrote Thomas, the wild wanderer, to the Committee : " I would fain tell you of our successful labours, of souls converted by the thousands ; but it may be seven years and seven more years before you hear of it. Remember Joseph."

Give me men to match my mountains,
Give me men to match my plains,
Men with Empires in their purpose,
Men with eras in their brains.

Carey had seen the missionary possibilities in Serampore and Fort William College. So from this centre there was a coming and a going inconceivable in its issue ; master-minds meeting other master-builders ; messengers to China, Burma and Tibet ; Carey the Sanskrit scholar, Marshman the Chinese student, Ward the printer. To this school of missionary enterprise scholars and pioneers came to learn for themselves, and to receive initiation into the mysteries of unknown tongues. Hither came an Alexander Duff and a Henry Martyn, who, writing home to Charles Simeon, said : " Three such men as Carey, Marshman and Ward, so suited to one another and their work, are not to be found, I think, in the whole world." Here in his garden of rare botanical interest and world-wide renown Carey conversed with the world's greatest spirits concerning the secrets of Oriental law and Christian simplicity.

G. K. Chesterton has described St. Francis of Assisi as a Saint who was always running. But William Carey was not of this order. He was a plodder. He did not appreciate his genius. Writing to his nephew Eustace, he says : " I can plod ; this is my only genius : I can persevere in any pursuit : to this I owe everything." Or again, he writes : " We must plan and plod as well as pray." Thus God builds His Kingdom, utilizing the various types of human kind : the brilliant intellectualist, the simple son of his native land, the light-hearted adventurer, and the gentle soul of quiet ways—here a dynamic personality of lightning energy and swift intuition—there a planning, praying plodder, each contributing a small mosaic to the great design of the Kingdom, in the land to which God has called him.

A famous *littérateur* has said : " The one hope of saving Pimlico is that somebody should love it ; if there arose a man who loved Pimlico then it would rise into ivory towers and golden pinnacles."

Carey loved his India ; over her people he yearned with self-sacrificing love. No toil was too arduous for the winning of one soul among her millions ; no act of self-immolation too costly to redeem her sin-stained and deluded children. Writing home after a long struggle with Krishna Pal, the first convert, whose immediate post-conversion failings found him misordering his home, rude, harsh, and alas, immoral, he said “ Compared with Europeans, they are a larger sort of children.” For the salvation of Bengal, there did come one who loved it with the love inspired of Him who endured the cross and shame for man’s uplifting. The uprising of William Carey with the love of Christ within his heart made ivory towers and golden pinnacles of true Christian character to rise in India’s darkened silences.

“Patience is Love waiting its Opportunity.” With untold patience Carey waited in love for the opportunities at Serampore, and when they came he seized them with the grip of love’s attachment. No record can do justice to those long years of watching over their early converts’ weaknesses ; no paragraph can tell the agony of those years of waiting upon his wife’s mental wanderings, which their early days of starvation and want in India had induced ; no page can catch the anguish of that loving spirit over his own son’s wanderings from the fold. Then came those long years of misunderstanding by the Home Committee. Old veterans who had shaken Carey by the hand as he left his native land, never to return, had passed away, and others had taken their places who had never even seen the Founder of Serampore. To them its structure was shorn of the glorious details of early struggle and sacrifice. Trustees were thrust in upon Carey to guard its continuity—“ the greatest sorrow,” wrote Marshman home. But, alas, the voice of slander was even heard, and there were those found who even accused this mighty character of money lust, to whom he wrote in the darkness of his sorrow, “ If I died to-morrow there would not be sufficient property left for the purchase of a coffin.” Serampore was built, printing presses were bought, with the Government salary of Marshman and Carey. From the day of his appointment in 1793 to his death, Carey did not receive more than £600 from the Society’s funds and contributed something like £40,000 to missionary work in India.

“Without Christian missions there would be no Christian Government.” This is a rarely challenged statement to-day. But in the yesterday of Carey it would have been bitterly repudiated. For six years the cloud of Government persecution settled down on the work in Bengal. Through foreign intervention help came occasionally. Fresh recruits for the field were refused admission. Every port was closed against them. Carey wrote : “ I mourn on my country’s account that preaching the Gospel should be regarded in the same light as committing a felony.” In 1806 an unfortunate oversight in translation work brought down on them one of the oft-repeated attacks, and orders were issued for the prohibition of all preaching and distribution of tracts to the native population.

A further disaster threatened in the decree ordering the removal of the beloved printing press to Calcutta. Carey sought interviews and begged permission to state the mission's cause to high officials, sometimes with success, sometimes without. "Don't you think, Dr. Carey," said Lord Minto, "that it is wrong to make Indians Christian?" Said Carey: "You mistake us, my lord. You can make hypocrites by compulsion, but Christians never. We only solicit the right to present the truth to each man's intelligence and conscience as our Master ordained."

I once heard Mr. Nelson Bitton say that in his judgment 70 per cent. of our Christian constituency were either hostile or indifferent to Christian missions. It is interesting with regard to our present position to read again the Parliamentary debates on Indian rule at the time of this acute controversy. The cause found strong advocacy in the person of England's greatest and best; it likewise discovered bitter antagonists, who never failed to launch out the full vials of their wrath in speech and on paper. Debates and meetings, papers and reviews were full of the question of Christian propaganda and the government of India. With characteristic courage the great Wilberforce championed the mission in company with some of India's more enlightened and far-seeing governors. The furore of the attack culminated before its utter failure in an article, written by the able journalist, Sydney Smith, in the *Edinburgh Review*, in which he found himself, beyond the limits of any restraint, concluding, "If a tinker be a devout man he sets out for the East." This called forth a slashing article, loaded with defence, from no less a pen than that of Southey, who said, "Carey and his son have been in Bengal fourteen years, the others only nine. These low-born and low-bred mechanics have translated the Bible into Bengali and have printed it. One of these was a shoemaker, one a printer, and the third a master of a charity school." Thus India's need was recognized and the Kingdom's cause prevailed. But the battle-ground was the Empire-building work of William Carey.

It is almost inconceivable to read of the amazing industry of Carey. In the speedy age of to-day business is the order. To examine the routine of the Doctor's day at the full height of his career is to be staggered at the quality of the man. Here is a day's work—June 12, 1806:

5.45-10. Heb. Ch. Prayer. Beng. Family worship. Persian with Munshi. Hindustani. Bfast. Ramayana with Sanskrit Pundit.

10-1.30. College.

1.30-6. Dinner. Beng. Isaiah proof. Skt. Matthew.

6-7. Tea. Telugu with Pundit. Visitor from England.

7-9. Prepared and preached English sermon to 40. Got £60 from a Judge present for Calcutta Chapel.

9-11. Beng. Ezekiel revision. Letter to Ryland. Gk. Test. Ch.

Only unsparing concentration and unceasing diligence can account for the stupendous output that came from the press at Serampore under the translational supervision of Drs. Carey and

Marshman, and the printing direction of Ward, who undertook the responsibility of cutting the type for all the languages in which the Bibles and Testaments were printed. Still further to illustrate the unparalleled quantity of original work which Carey successfully carried through, a list is perhaps more effective. He translated the Bible or parts thereof into thirty-four languages or dialects. A summary of his Biblical translation is as follows :

1. THE WHOLE BIBLE into Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Marathi, Sanskrit, and Assamese.
2. O.T. and N.T. (O.T. to Ezek. xxvi.), Punjabi.
3. N.T. and O.T. to 2 Kings, Pashto and Kashmiri.
4. N.T. and Pentateuch into Telugu and Konkari.
5. Eighteen other N.T.'s.
6. Five more Gospels.

It only remains to indicate to you the vastness of the organizational work set up at Serampore. It is difficult to realize the many strings which Carey held in his translational, collegiate, professorial, evangelizational, botanical and printing work. The extent of the work which his labours had built up is best grasped perhaps by a reference to the great fire. On March 2, 1812, Carey had gone to Calcutta, when news came to him that a great fire had devastated the press and foundry. The cause of the fire was doubtful, but the loss seemed irreparable. One thousand reams of English paper just arrived, 4,000 pounds in weight of English type, 104 founts (cast by Ward's own hands) of Nagari, Telugu, Bengali, Burman, Marathi, Punjabi, Tamil, Chinese, and Kashmiri, totally destroyed.

Carey was the worst sufferer, for his precious MSS. were largely involved. The whole of his completed MSS. of Kanarese N.T. gone ; two whole N.T. MSS. in Sanskrit burnt ; many pages of his Bengali Dictionary destroyed ; the whole of his Telugu Grammar and his greatest work, the Dictionary of Sanskrit and Indian cognates, wiped out. The total estimated material loss, apart from the irreplaceable manuscript, was £10,000. It is, however, significant of the great missionary enthusiasm which Carey's life-work had aroused that the material loss was made good by Britain in two months.

In early days a young artisan itinerant with *Dr. Cook's Voyages* on his knees is sitting down to write a work which is called "The Enquiry," for its purpose is to describe the condition and need of all the known races of the earth. In later years in Bengali this same itinerant is found answering their need with the presentation to them of the Gospel story in a language they understand. It was in no fit of absentmindedness that Carey possessed his India. He loved her peoples ; his heart yearned to save them from their degradation and shame. The final appraisal of the work of William Carey must be beyond the dream of Prime Ministers and earthly rulers. Of it Dr. Fairbairn has said : "The English came to India first as merchants to gain wealth, then as warriors

to gain land. It was only as Carey came that a nobler spirit entered and England began to feel that her best gift to India was Christ."

He passes, but his work remains. Forty long years of Carey's Indian labours are about to end. Thus to the closing day of earth's sorrow and sacrifice this great spirit comes with unclouded jubilation. A work well done, the words fitly chosen, the right phrase secured, the last chapter completed. In a darkened room, one whose name is to be hereafter inscribed too upon the Roll of Honour, Alexander Duff, is talking softly to our aged Doctor about his work in India, and after the request for prayer, he gently leaves, when a voice is heard whispering, "You mentioned a Dr. Carey, a Dr. Carey, I think; when he is gone, don't talk of him, mention only Dr. Carey's Saviour."

CYPRIAN: DE UNITATE ECCLESIAE. The Text with Translation, Introduction and Notes. By E. H. Blakeney, M.A. London: S.P.C.K. Paper cover, 1s. 6d.; cloth, 2s. 6d.

Students owe a debt to the venerable S.P.C.K. for the series of texts of which this is No. 43. The Latin text is printed on the left pages with the translation opposite. There are some wise and important notes on certain interpolations designed to strengthen Papal claims, and Mr. Blakeney observes (on Section 4) that Cyprian taught that nothing was granted to Peter which was not given to *all* the Apostles. There is a brief sketch of Cyprian's life and a list of quotations from the Canonical books of the Old and New Testaments. Hitherto no separate edition of *de Unitate* has been available and we are grateful to Mr. Blakeney for a little bit of really scholarly work.

S. R. C.

OVERCOMING HANDICAPS. By Archer Wallace. *H. R. Allenson, Ltd.* 2s. 6d. net.

This is "A second series of thrilling tales of boys who made good." Among those whose life story is briefly but graphically told are Arthur Kavanagh, "an almost armless and legless boy who became an M.P."; John Flaxman, "the delicate boy who became England's greatest sculptor"; Robert Louis Stevenson, "the sick lad with a merry heart"; Beethoven, "the composer who could not hear his own music"; Thomas Alva Edison, "the newsboy who became a great inventor." These are among the best known. Among the rest are several who have won for themselves positions of importance and influence in America. These stories are wonderful examples of perseverance in overcoming almost insuperable difficulties, and should be an inspiration to young people.