

ture and read and lectured right through, practically expounding and applying it. On Thursday I held a Communicants' Class, intended for the more careful instruction of all who wished to become full members of the Church. Our constant text-book was *Paterson on the Shorter Catechism* (Nelson and Sons), than which I have never seen a better compendium of the doctrines of Holy Scripture. Each being thus trained for a season, received from me, if found worthy, a letter to the Minister of any Protestant Church which he or she felt inclined to join. In this way great numbers became active and useful communicants in the surrounding congregations; and eight young lads of humble circumstances educated themselves for the Ministry of the Church—most of them getting their first lessons in Latin and Greek from my very poor stock of the same! Friday evening was occupied with a Singing Class, teaching Church music, and practising for our Sabbath meetings. On Saturday evening we held our Total Abstinence meeting, at which the members themselves took a principal part, in readings, addresses, recitations, singing hymns, etc.

Great good resulted from this Total Abstinence work. Many adults took and kept the pledge, thereby greatly increasing the comfort and happiness of their homes. Many were led to attend the Church on the Lord's Day, who had formerly spent it in rioting and drinking. But, above all, it trained the young to fear the very name of Intoxicating Drink, and to hate and keep far away from everything that led to intemperance.

I would add my testimony also against the use of tobacco, which injures and leads many astray, especially lads and young men, and which never can be required by any person in ordinary health. But I would not be understood to regard the evils that flow from it as deserving to be mentioned in comparison with the unutterable woes and miseries of intemperance.

To be protected, however, from suspicion and from evil, all the followers of our Lord Jesus should, in self-denial (how small!) and in consecration to His service, be pledged Abstainers from both of these selfish indulgences, which are certainly injurious to many, which are no ornament to any character, and which can be no help in well-doing. Praise God for the many who are now so pledged!

CHAPTER VIII

GLASGOW EXPERIENCES

ON one occasion, it becoming known that we had arranged for a special Saturday afternoon Temperance demonstration, a deputation of Publicans complained beforehand to the Captain of the Police—that our meetings were interfering with their legitimate trade. The Captain, a pious Wesleyan, who was in full sympathy with us and our work, informed me of the complaints made, and intimated that his men would be present; but I was just to conduct the meeting as usual, and he would guarantee that strict justice would be done. The Publicans having announced amongst their sympathisers that the Police were to break up and prevent our meeting and take the conductors in charge, a very large crowd assembled, both friendly and unfriendly, for the Publicans and their hangers-on were there "to see the fun," and to help in "baiting" the Missionary. Punctually, I ascended the stone stair, accompanied by another Missionary who was also to deliver an address, and announced our opening hymn. As we sang, a company of Police appeared, and were quietly located here and there among the crowd, the sergeant himself taking his post close by the platform, whence the whole assembly could be scanned. Our enemies were jubilant, and signals were passed betwixt them and their friends, as if the time had come to provoke a row. Before the hymn was finished, Captain Baker himself, to the infinite surprise of friend and foe alike, joined us on the platform, devoutly listened to all that was said, and waited till the close. The Publicans could not for very shame leave, while he was there at their suggestion and request, though they had wit enough to perceive that his presence had frustrated all their sinister plans. They had to hear our addresses and prayers and hymns; they had to listen to the intimation of our future meetings. When all had quietly dispersed, the Captain warmly congratulated us on our large and well-conducted congregation, and hoped that great good would result from our efforts. This opposition also the Lord overruled to increase our influence, and to give point and publicity to our assaults upon the kingdom of Satan.

Though Intemperance was the main cause of poverty, suffering, misery, and vice in that district of Glasgow, I had also considerable opposition from Romanists and Infidels, many of whom met in clubs, where they drank together, and gloried in their wickedness and in leading other young men astray.

An Infidel, whose wife was a Roman Catholic, became unwell, and gradually sank under great suffering and agony. His blasphemies against God were known and shuddered at by all the neighbours. His wife pled with me to visit him. She refused, at my suggestion, to call her own priest, so I accompanied her at last. The man refused to hear one word about spiritual things, and foamed with rage. He even spat at me, when I mentioned the name of Jesus. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him!" There is a "wisdom" which is at best earthly, and *at worst* "sensual and devilish." I visited the poor man daily, but his enmity to God and his sufferings together seemed to drive him mad. Towards the end I pled with him even then to look to the Lord Jesus, and asked if I might pray with him? With all his remaining strength he shouted at me, "Pray for me to the devil!"

Reminding him how he had always denied that there was any devil, I suggested that he must surely believe in one now, else he would scarcely make such a request, even in mockery. In great rage he cried, "Yes, I believe there is a devil, and a God, and a just God too; but I have hated Him in life, and I hate Him in death!" With these awful words he wriggled into Eternity; but his shocking death produced a very serious impression for good, especially amongst young men, in the district where his character was known.

How different was the case of that Doctor who also had been an unbeliever as well as a drunkard! Highly educated, skilful, and gifted above most in his profession, he was taken into consultation for specially dangerous cases, whenever they could find him tolerably sober. After one of his excessive "bouts" he had a dreadful attack of *delirium tremens*. At one time wife and watchers had a fierce struggle to dash from his lips a draught of prussic acid; at another, they detected the silver-hafted lancet concealed in the band of his shirt, as he lay down, to bleed himself to death. His aunt came and

pled with me to visit him. My heart bled for his poor young wife and two beautiful little children. Visiting him twice daily, and sometimes even more frequently, I found the way somehow into his heart, and he would do almost anything for me and longed for my visits. When again the fit of self-destruction seized him, they sent for me; he held out his hand eagerly, and grasping mine said, "Put all these people out of the room, remain you with me; I will be quiet, I will do everything you ask!"

I got them all to leave, but whispered to one in passing to "keep near the door."

Alone I sat beside him, my hand in his, and kept up a quiet conversation for several hours. After we had talked of everything that I could think of, and it was now far into the morning, I said, "If you had a Bible here, we might read a chapter, verse about."

He said dreamily, "There was once a Bible above yon press; if you can get up to it, you might find it there yet."

Getting it, dusting it, and laying it on a small table which I drew near to the sofa on which we sat, we read there and then a chapter together. After this, I said, "Now, shall we pray?"

He replied heartily, "Yes."

I having removed the little table, we kneeled down together at the sofa; and after a solemn pause, I whispered, "You pray first."

He replied, "I curse, I cannot pray; would you have me curse God to His face?"

I answered, "You promised to do all that I asked; you must pray, or try to pray, and let me hear that you cannot."

He said, "I cannot curse God on my knees; let me stand, and I will curse Him; I cannot pray."

I gently held him on his knees, saying, "Just try to pray, and let me hear you cannot."

Instantly he cried out, "O Lord, Thou knowest I cannot pray," and was going to say something dreadful as he strove to rise up. But I took up gently the words he had uttered as if they had been my own, and continued the prayer, pleading for him and his dear ones as we knelt there together, till he showed that he was completely subdued and lying low at the

feet of God. On rising from our knees he was manifestly greatly impressed, and I said, "Now, as I must be at College by daybreak and must return to my lodging for my books and an hour's rest, will you do one thing more for me before I go?"

"Yes," was his reply.

"Then," said I, "it is long since you had a refreshing sleep; now, will you lie down, and I will sit by you till you fall asleep?"

He lay down, and was soon fast asleep. After commending him to the care and blessing of the Lord, I quietly slipped out, and his wife returned to watch by his side. When I came back later in the day, after my Classes were over, he, on hearing my foot and voice, came running to meet me, and clasping me in his arms, cried, "Thank God, I can pray now! I rose this morning refreshed from sleep, and prayed with my wife and children for the first time in my life; and now I shall do so every day, and serve God while I live, who hath dealt in so great mercy with me!"

After delightful conversation, he promised to go with me to Dr. Symington's church on Sabbath Day; there he took sittings beside me; at next half-yearly Communion he and his wife were received into membership, and their children were baptized; and from that day till his death he led a devoted and most useful Christian life. He now sleeps in Jesus; and I do believe that I shall meet him in Glory as a trophy of redeeming grace and love!

In my Mission district I was the witness of many joyful departures to be with Jesus,—I do not like to name them "deaths" at all. They left us rejoicing in the bright assurance that nothing present or to come "could ever separate them or us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Many examples might be given; but I can find room for only one. John Sim, a dear little boy, was carried away by consumption. His child-heart seemed to be filled with joy about seeing Jesus. His simple prattle, mingled with deep questionings, arrested not only his young companions, but pierced the hearts of some careless sinners who heard him, and greatly refreshed the faith of God's dear people. It was the very pathos of song incarnated to hear the weak quaver of his dying voice sing out—

"I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God."

Shortly before his decease he said to his parents, "I am going soon to be with Jesus; but I sometimes fear that I may not see you there."

"Why so, my child?" said his weeping mother.

"Because," he answered, "if you were set upon going to Heaven and seeing Jesus there, you would pray about it, and sing about it; you would talk about Jesus to others, and tell them of that happy meeting with Him in Glory. All this my dear Sabbath School teacher taught me, and she will meet me there. Now why did not you, my father and mother, tell me all these things about Jesus, if you are going to meet Him too?" Their tears fell fast over their dying child; and he little knew, in his unthinking eighth year, what a message from God had pierced their souls through his innocent words.

One day an aunt from the country visited his mother, and their talk had run in channels for which the child no longer felt any interest. On my sitting down beside him, he said, "Sit you down and talk with me about Jesus; I am tired hearing so much talk about everything else but Jesus; I am going soon to be with Him. Oh, do tell me everything you know or have ever heard about Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God!"

At last the child literally longed to be away, not for rest, or freedom from pain—for of that he had very little—but, as he himself always put it, "to see Jesus." And, after all, that was the wisdom of the heart, however he learned it. Eternal life, here or hereafter, is just the vision of Jesus.

CHAPTER IX

A FOREIGN MISSIONARY

HAPPY in my work as I felt through these ten years, and successful by the blessing of God, yet I continually heard, and chiefly during my last years in the Divinity Hall, the wail of the perishing Heathen in the South Seas; and I saw that few

were caring for them, while I well knew that many would be ready to take up my work in Calton, and carry it forward perhaps with more efficiency than myself. Without revealing the state of my mind to any person, this was the supreme subject of my daily meditation and prayer; and this also led me to enter upon those medical studies, in which I purposed taking the full course; but at the close of my third year, an incident occurred, which led me at once to offer myself for the Foreign Mission field.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, in which I had been brought up, had been advertising for another Missionary to join the Rev. John Inglis in his grand work on the New Hebrides. Dr. Bates, the excellent convener of the Heathen Missions Committee, was deeply grieved, because for two years their appeal had failed. At length, the Synod, after much prayer and consultation, felt the claims of the Heathen so urgently pressed upon them by the Lord's repeated calls, that they resolved to cast lots, to discover whether God would thus select any Minister to be relieved from his home-charge, and designated as a Missionary to the South Seas. Each member of Synod, as I was informed, agreed to hand in, after solemn appeal to God, the names of the three best qualified in his esteem for such a work, and he who had the clear majority was to be loosed from his congregation, and to proceed to the Mission field—or the first and second highest, if two could be secured. Hearing this debate, and feeling an intense interest in these most unusual proceedings, I remember yet the hushed solemnity of the prayer before the names were handed in. I remember the strained silence that held the Assembly while the scrutinisers retired to examine the papers; and I remember how tears blinded my eyes when they returned to announce that the result was so indecisive, that it was clear that the Lord had not in that way provided a Missionary. The cause was once again solemnly laid before God in prayer, and a cloud of sadness appeared to fall over all the Synod.

The Lord kept saying within me, "Since none better qualified can be got, rise and offer yourself!" Almost overpowering was the impulse to answer aloud, "Here am I, send me." But I was dreadfully afraid of mistaking my mere human emotions for the will of God. So I resolved to make it a subject of close deliberation and prayer for a few days longer,

and to look at the proposal from every possible aspect. Besides, I was keenly solicitous about the effect upon the hundreds of young people and others, now attached to all my Classes and Meetings; and yet I felt a growing assurance that this was the call of God to His servant, and that He who was willing to employ me in the work abroad, was both able and willing to provide for the on-carrying of my work at home. My medical studies, as well as my literary and divinity training, had specially qualified me in some ways for the Foreign field, and from every aspect at which I could look the whole facts in the face, the voice within me sounded like a voice from God.

It was under good Dr. Bates of West Campbell Street that I had begun my career in Glasgow—receiving £25 per annum for district visitation in connection with his Congregation, along with instruction under Mr. Hislop and his staff in the Free Church Normal Seminary—and oh, how Dr. Bates did rejoice, and even weep for joy, when I called on him, and offered myself for the New Hebrides Mission! I returned to my lodging with a lighter heart than I had for some time enjoyed, feeling that nothing so clears the vision, and lifts up the life, as a decision to move forward in what you know to be entirely the will of the Lord. I said to my fellow-student, Joseph Copeland, who had chummed with me all through our course at college, "I have been away signing my banishment" (a rather trifling way of talk for such an occasion). "I have offered myself as a Missionary for the New Hebrides."

After a long and silent meditation, in which he seemed lost in far wandering thoughts, his answer was, "If they will accept of me, I am also resolved to go!"

I said, "Will you write the Convener to that effect, or let me do so?"

He replied, "You may."

A few minutes later his letter of offer was in the post office. Next morning Dr. Bates called upon us early, and after a long conversation, commended us and our future work to the Lord God in fervent prayer. At a meeting of the Foreign Missions Committee, held immediately thereafter, both were, after due deliberation, formally accepted, on condition that we passed successfully the usual examinations required of candidates for

the Ministry. And for the next twelve months we were placed under a special committee for advice as to medical experience, acquaintance with the rudiments of trades, and anything else which might be thought useful to us in the Foreign field.

When it became known that I was preparing to go abroad as Missionary, nearly all were dead against the proposal, except Dr. Bates and my fellow-student. My dear father and mother, however, when I consulted them, characteristically replied, "that they had long since given me away to the Lord, and in this matter also would leave me to God's disposal." From other quarters we were besieged with the strongest opposition on all sides. Even Dr. Symington, one of my professors in divinity, and the beloved Minister in connection with whose congregation I had wrought so long as a City Missionary, and in whose Kirk Session I had for years sat as an Elder, repeatedly urged me to remain at home.

To his arguments I replied, "that my mind was finally resolved; that, though I loved my work and my people, yet I felt that I could leave them to the care of Jesus, who would soon provide them a better pastor than I; and that, with regard to my life amongst the Cannibals, as I had only once to die, I was content to leave the time and place and means in the hand of God, who had already marvellously preserved me when visiting cholera patients and the fever-stricken poor; on that score I had positively no further concern, having left it all absolutely to the Lord, whom I sought to serve and honour, whether in life or by death."

The house connected with my Green Street Church was now offered to me for a Manse, and any reasonable salary that I cared to ask (as against the promised £120 per annum for the far-off and dangerous New Hebrides), on condition that I would remain at home. I cannot honestly say that such offers or opposing influences proved a heavy trial to me; they rather tended to confirm my determination that the path of duty was to go abroad.

Amongst many who sought to deter me, was one dear old Christian gentleman, whose crowning argument always was, "The Cannibals! you will be eaten by Cannibals!" At last I replied, "Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and



"The Cannibals! you will be eaten by the Cannibals!"

die serving and honouring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my resurrection body will arise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer."

The old gentleman, raising his hands in a deprecating attitude, left the room exclaiming, "After that I have nothing more to say!"

My dear Green Street people grieved excessively at the thought of my leaving them, and daily pled with me to remain. Indeed, the opposition was so strong from nearly all, and many of them warm Christian friends, that I was sorely tempted to question whether I was carrying out the Divine will, or only some headstrong wish of my own. But conscience said louder and clearer every day, "Leave all these results with Jesus your Lord, who said, 'Go ye into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature, and lo! I am with you alway.'" These words kept ringing in my ears; these were our *marching orders*.

Some retorted upon me, "There are Heathen at home; let us seek and save, first of all, the lost ones perishing at our doors." This I felt to be most true, and an appalling fact; but I unfailingly observed that those who made this retort neglected these Home Heathen themselves; and so the objection, as from them, lost all its power.

On meeting, however, with so many obstructing influences, I again laid the whole matter before my dear parents, and their reply was to this effect:—"Heretofore we feared to bias you, but now we must tell you why we praise God for the decision to which you have been led. Your father's heart was set upon being a Minister, but other claims forced him to give it up. When you were given to them, your father and mother laid you upon the altar, their first-born, to be consecrated, if God saw fit, as a Missionary of the Cross; and it has been their constant prayer that you might be prepared, qualified, and led to this very decision; and we pray with all our heart that the Lord may accept your offering, long spare you, and give you many souls from the Heathen World for your hire." From that moment, every doubt as to my path of duty for ever vanished. I saw the hand of God very visibly, not only preparing me for, but now leading me to, the Foreign Mission field.

Well did I know that the sympathy and prayers of my dear parents were warmly with me in all my studies and in all my Mission work; but for my education they could, of course, give me no money help. All through, on the contrary, it was my pride and joy to help them, being the eldest in a family of eleven; though I here most gladly and gratefully record that all my brothers and sisters, as they grew up and began to earn a living, took their full share in this same blessed privilege. For we stuck to each other and to the old folks like burs, and had all things "in common," as a family in Christ—and I knew that never again, howsoever long they might be spared through the peaceful autumn of life, would the dear old father and mother lack any joy or comfort that the willing hands and loving hearts of all their children could singly or unitedly provide. For all this I did praise the Lord! It consoled me, beyond description, in parting from them, probably for ever, in this world at least.

CHAPTER X

TO THE NEW HEBRIDES

ON the first of December 1857—being then in my thirty-third year—the other Missionary-designate and I were "licensed" as preachers of the Gospel. Thereafter we spent four months in visiting and addressing nearly every Congregation and Sabbath School in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, that the people might see us and know us, and thereby take a personal interest in our work. On the 23rd March 1858, in Dr. Symington's church, Glasgow, in presence of a mighty crowd, and after a magnificent sermon on "Come over and help us," we were solemnly ordained as Ministers of the Gospel, and set apart as Missionaries to the New Hebrides. On the 16th April of the same year, we left the Tail of the Bank at Greenock, and set sail in the *Clutha* for the Foreign Mission field.

Our voyage to Melbourne was rather tedious, but ended prosperously, under Captain Broadfoot, a kindly, brave-hearted Scot, who did everything that was possible for our comfort.

He himself led the singing on board at Worship, which was always charming to me, and was always regularly conducted—on deck when the weather was fair, below when it was rough. I was also permitted to conduct Bible Classes amongst both the crew and the passengers, at times and places approved of by the Captain—in which there was great joy.

Arriving at Melbourne, we were welcomed by Rev. Mr. Moor, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Wilson, and Mr. Wright, all Reformed Presbyterians from Geelong. Mr. Wilson's two children, Jessie and Donald, had been under our care during the voyage; and my young wife and I went with them for a few days on a visit to Geelong, while Mr. Copeland remained on board the *Clutha* to look after our boxes and to watch for any opportunity of reaching our destination on the Islands. He heard that an American ship, the *Francis P. Sage*, was sailing from Melbourne to Penang; and the Captain agreed to land us on Aneityum, New Hebrides, with our two boats and fifty boxes, for £100. We got on board on the 12th August, but such a gale blew that we did not sail till the 17th. On the *Clutha* all was quiet, and good order prevailed; in the *F. P. Sage* all was noise and profanity. The Captain said he kept his second mate for the purpose of swearing at the men and knocking them about. The voyage was most disagreeable to all of us, but fortunately it lasted only twelve days. On the 29th we were close up to Aneityum; but the Captain refused to land us, even in his boats; some of us suspecting that his men were so badly used that had they got on shore they would never have returned to him! In any case he had beforehand secured his £100.

He lay off the island till a trader's boat pulled across to see what we wanted, and by it we sent a note to Dr. Geddie, one of the Missionaries there. Early next morning, Monday, he arrived in his boat, accompanied by Mr. Mathieson, a newly-arrived Missionary from Nova Scotia; bringing also Captain Anderson in the small Mission schooner, the *John Knox*, and a large Mission boat called the *Columbia*, well manned with crews of able and willing Natives. Our fifty boxes were soon on board the *John Knox*, the *Columbia*, and our own boats—all being heavily loaded and built up, except those that had to be used in pulling the others ashore. Dr. Geddie, Mr. Mathieson, Mrs. Paton, and I were perched among the boxes

on the *John Knox*, and had to hold on as best we could. On sheering off from the *F. P. Sage*, one of her davits caught and broke the mainmast of the little *John Knox* by the deck; and I saved my wife from being crushed to death by its fall, through managing to swing her instantaneously aside in an apparently impossible manner. It did graze Mr. Mathieson, but he was not hurt. The *John Knox*, already overloaded, was thus quite disabled; we were about ten miles at sea, and in imminent danger; but the captain of the *F. P. Sage* heartlessly sailed away, and left us to struggle with our fate.

We drifted steadily in the direction of Tanna, an island of Cannibals, where our goods would have been plundered and all of us cooked and eaten. Dr. Geddie's boat and mine had the *John Knox* in tow; and Mr. Copeland, with a crew of Natives, was struggling hard with his boat to pull the *Columbia* and her load towards Aneityum. As God mercifully ordered it, though we had a stiff trade wind to pull against, we had a comparatively calm sea; yet we drifted still to leeward, till Dr. Inglis going round to the harbour in his boat, as he had heard of our arrival, saw us far at sea, and hastened to our rescue. All the boats now, with their willing Native crews, got fastened to our schooner, and to our great joy she began to move ahead. After pulling for hours and hours, under the scorching rays of a tropical sun, we were all safely landed on shore at Aneityum, about six o'clock in the evening of 30th August, just four months and fourteen days since we sailed from Greenock. We got a hearty welcome from the Missionaries' wives, Mrs. Geddie, Mrs. Inglis, and Mrs. Mathieson, and from all our new friends, the Christian Natives of Aneityum; and the great danger in which both life and property had been placed at the close of our voyage, made us praise God all the more that He had brought us to this quiet resting-place, around which lay the Islands of the New Hebrides, to which our eager hearts had looked forward, and into which we entered now in the name of the Lord.

Mr. Copeland, Mrs. Paton, and I went round the island to Dr. Inglis's Station, where we were most cordially received and entertained by his dear lady, and by the Christian Natives there. As he was making several additions to his house at that time, we received for the next few weeks our first practical and valuable training in Mission house-building, as well as in

higher matters. Soon after, a meeting was called to consult about our settlement, and, by the advice and with the concurrence of all, Mr. and Mrs. Mathieson from Nova Scotia were located on the south side of Tanna, at Umairarekar, and Mrs. Paton and I at Port Resolution, on the same island. At first it was agreed that Mr. Copeland should be placed along with us; but owing to the weakly state of Mrs. Mathieson's health, it was afterwards resolved that, for a time at least, Mr. Copeland should live at either Station, as might seem most suitable or most requisite.

Dr. Inglis and a number of his most energetic Natives accompanied us to Umairarekar, Tanna. There we purchased a site for Mission House and Church, and laid a stone foundation, and advanced as far as practicable the erection of a dwelling for Mr. and Mrs. Mathieson. Thence we proceeded to Port Resolution, Tanna, and similarly purchased a site, and advanced, to a forward stage, the house which Mrs. Paton and I were to occupy on our settlement there. Lime for plastering had to be burned in kilns from the coral rocks; and thatch, for roofing with sugar-cane leaf, had to be prepared by the Natives at both Stations before our return; for which, as for all else, a price was duly agreed upon, and was scrupulously paid. Unfortunately we learned, when too late, that both houses were too near the shore, exposed to unwholesome miasma, and productive of the dreaded fever and ague,—the most virulent and insidious enemy to all Europeans in those Southern Seas.

CHAPTER XI

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF HEATHENDOM

My first impressions drove me, I must confess, to the verge of utter dismay. On beholding these Natives in their paint and nakedness and misery, my heart was as full of horror as of pity. Had I given up my much-beloved work and my dear people in Glasgow, with so many delightful associations, to consecrate my life to these degraded creatures? Was it possible to teach them right and wrong, to Christianise, or even to civilise them? But that was only a passing feeling!