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Biography.

MEMOIR OF REV. LEVI PARSONS, LATE MISSIONARY TO PALESTINE.

THE biographical notices of Mr. Parsons, with which we shall commence this number of the Herald, are from a life of this excellent missionary, published some time last year, by his brother-in-law, the Rev. Daniel O. Morton, of Shoreham, Vt. The volume contains 431 pages. Of course we have not room for any thing like an abstract of the work; which, by readers who have a taste for exhibitions of sound experimental and practical piety, and of genuine missionary devotedness, has, we understand, been uniformly perused with great pleasure.

LEVI PARSONS was the second son of Rev. Justin Parsons, and was born in Goshen, Mass. July 18, 1792. His childhood was characterized by unusual amiableness of disposition, and an uncommon exercise of the domestic virtues. Like Samuel, he was early devoted to the Lord, to minister before him in the service of the sanctuary. During a revival of religion in the winter and spring of 1808, he was hopefully converted, and, in the June following, publicly professed his faith in Christ. In August 1810, he became a member of Middlebury college, in Vermont. The next year that seminary was blessed with an effusion of the Holy Spirit. About this time Mr. Parsons began very seriously to question the genuineness of his piety. His reasons, as stated by himself, were the following—'his hope did not afford consolation; prayer was not refreshing and spiritual; and religious conversation was no more interesting than conversation upon the things of the world.' For a number of weeks he was almost in a state of despair. But this season of darkness and sorrow, was followed by one of peculiar light and joy.

"During the period under consideration Mr. Parsons supposed that he had ever before been a stranger to vital godliness. But on farther examination of his heart, and more mature reflection, he was on the whole rather

inclined to think otherwise. Whether he was, or was not a true believer before; this was eminently a new era in his Christian life, and he now received an impulse in religion, which he never lost. The remark, though not new, is doubtless just, that the mind sometimes receives a bias in conversion, or in the period of first love, which gives a particular direction to the whole course of future life. This was the fact in the present instance. For in this delightful period of his espousals to Christ, the wants and wretchedness of the heathen very deeply impressed the mind of Mr. Parsons; and some of his first desires were for their illumination and conversion." [*Memoir, p. 20.*]

In his journal, under date of April 5, 1812, Mr. P. thus speaks of a mission to the heathen.

"I frequently think of spending my life as a missionary to the heathen. This consideration sometimes fires me with uncommon zeal. I hope God will cause me to know his will, make me willing to go wherever he pleases, prepare me to fight his battles, and afterwards receive me to his kingdom. I intend to think of heaven this week in my leisure hours." *page 23.*

Again, in a letter to his parents, in which he first explained to them his views and wishes on this subject, he says:

"From that blessed moment, when, as I trust, I experienced the smiles of heaven, and the joys of pardoned sin, the deplorable condition of the heathen has sensibly affected

my mind. I have desired, and sometimes resolved, by the leave of Providence, to proclaim in their ears a crucified Savior. This spring the subject has appeared more solemn than ever; and often I am in the centre of Asia listening to the groans of the eastern world, which are waited to heaven for deliverance." *p. 36.*

Again, he says:—"Become a missionary—O blessed thought! May I indulge it! Labor, toil, suffer and die for souls—O the honor is too great! 'Tis an angel's trust. Here I pause and wonder.

"Weigh against one soul, the pleasures of civilized life, the endearments of friends and relatives, the gold of Ophir, and the treasures of the east; how unequal the balance! The sacrifice of our little all should be disregarded, when the glory of God, and the joys of heaven are brought into view. I have already given myself away to God, I hope, without reserve. Nor do I wish to make any reserve as to my future life. Where his Spirit directs I feel bound to follow. Should infinite mercy grant me a crown of glory, how pleasing the consideration to have it sparkle with heathen souls. Nay, farther, how pleasing to labor, to toil and suffer for him, who, through infinite condescension and boundless grace, endured the pains of Calvary!" *pp. 37, 38.*

Mr. Parsons was graduated in 1814, and left college with a highly respectable standing as a scholar. While at Middlebury, he was permitted to witness four revivals of religion. 'In the promotion of at least three of them, he was in some degree instrumental.' Of his religious life during that period, his biographer gives an account, which deserves the attention of all professors of godliness.

"His usefulness, while in college, was considerable. His unassuming deportment, uniform piety, and Christian faithfulness, will doubtless be remembered by a goodly number with unceasing gratitude. Many of his leisure hours were employed in religious conversation with his fellow students; others were spent in visiting from house to house, and recommending that Redeemer on whom he believed. He was generally accompanied in these excursions by a Christian brother; and often by that dear friend, who has since been his companion in labor and tribulation. In July 1812, while many were celebrating our nation's birth day, Mr. Parsons and the writer walked four miles, and after we commenced our labor of love, called at every house, conversed with every individual, and prayed in every family. At another time he wandered alone a short distance from college, and called at a house, where was a company of young ladies, all strangers. At first he hesitated whether to introduce religious conversation, fearing it would be unwelcome. But reflecting on his covenant vows, and that he must meet these young immortals in judg-

ment; he tenderly and faithfully recommended to their consideration the importance of early piety. When he departed, all were solemn, and some in tears. Toward the close of his senior year he went several times to some of the mountain towns in the vicinity of Middlebury, and assisted the scattered disciples there in the devotions of the Sabbath. Justice requires me to state that these labors of love were not performed at the expense of college duties. In his attention to these he was conscientiously and minutely faithful. And though not actuated by a worldly ambition, few, if any, have been more anxious to store their minds with useful knowledge, or more diligent in the pursuit." *pp. 42, 43.*

In the autumn of 1814, Mr. P. became a member of the Theological Seminary at Andover. Here he found spirits congenial with his own.—In 1816, he took up the question of a mission to the heathen with great seriousness. Thus he states it:

"That it is the duty of some young men to devote themselves to the missionary cause, I cannot doubt. The heathen must not perish without the bread of life. Obedience to the divine commands, and gratitude for the blessings of the Gospel, will not permit so many of our fellow men to remain in ignorance and spiritual death. Their cries must be regarded; their wants must be supplied. But it is not the duty of *all* to go to the heathen. The waste places of Zion must be built up; the Gospel must be preached to the millions in our own country, which are perishing for lack of knowledge; our churches must be under the care of faithful teachers of divine truth. The present state of the church demands both missionaries and pastors.

"But what is my duty? A question vastly important and momentous. A question which demands the most serious and prayerful attention. Should I err here, it might be at the expense of my usefulness and happiness for life. I desire therefore to proceed with the greatest impartiality and seriousness; sensible of the danger of leaning to my own understanding, and of being influenced by worldly or sinful motives. O Lord, direct me, 'for I lift up my soul unto thee.'

"As it is not by a voice from heaven, nor by any miraculous impulse upon the mind, that duty is made known; I ought to examine the leadings of Providence, my feelings, the feelings of my friends, my health, and my qualifications for a work so important.

"If my feelings are of such a nature as would render me unhappy among the heathen; if my health is insufficient to endure the trials and sacrifices of such a life; if my qualifications are inadequate; duty would require me to engage in some other employment." *pp. 91, 92.*

He then proceeds to examine the subject at considerable length, and with much fairness. For that whole documents, as well as for copious extracts from Mr. Parsons's jour-

nals and letters, the reader is referred to the original Memoir. We cannot, however, omit quoting his views with respect to his *qualifications* for the missionary service.

"The qualifications for a missionary life are too numerous to be particularly discussed at present. It has been a source of sorrow and pain to me, that my qualifications so little compare with those which are indispensable to a successful missionary. My acquirements are far below what every minister should possess; but what I do possess are of such a nature as would perhaps be as favorable to a missionary life, as to any other. The employment of a missionary would better suit my disposition than any other. To spend my life in inculcating the first principles of our holy religion, in teaching children the way of life, in establishing schools, societies, religious meetings, and many such things, would be peculiarly pleasant and comforting. In this way I would willingly live and die. My own unpreparedness for this work calls loudly for humiliation; yet, through Christ strengthening me, I can do all things. I depend on his mercy to be faithful and persevering. God is my Refuge and my Hope. He will never leave me nor forsake me."

pp. 97, 98.

In September 1817, Mr. P. was ordained at Boston to the work of a missionary; and immediately afterwards engaged his services for six months in Vermont, under the direction of the Missionary Society of that state. This mission, by the grace of God, was very successful. He then spent nearly four months in forming juvenile societies; during which time, he visited twenty-two towns, formed thirty-two societies, and collected nearly 3,000 dollars. In the fall of 1818, Mr. P. commenced an agency in behalf of the American Board of Missions, which he performed much to the satisfaction of his patrons and employers. During this agency, 6,000 dollars were collected and subscribed in aid of missions to the heathen.

It is well known, that Mr. Fisk was Mr. Parsons's companion in labor and travel, from the time of leaving Boston for the Mediterranean, in November 1819, with one interruption, till the decease of the latter. Nor are our readers unacquainted with the interesting history of their labors and travels during that period. A mutual dedication, which they made to each other, and to the mission on which they expected to enter, furnishes a valuable hint and model to those, who may be placed in like circumstances. It is dated a year before their embarkation.

"Salem, Nov. 6, 1818.—Set apart this day, agreeably to appointment, for the pur-

pose of a more particular examination of our duty. After prayer and confession of our sins, the subject of a mutual and *private* dedication of ourselves to the work assigned us was introduced and considered. Many advantages, it was supposed, might be derived from a formal consecration to this mission. It may remind us more frequently that the vows of the Lord are upon us; it may be of use in some seasons of trial, in some unexpected affliction to which this work must expose us. After mature reflection, and (we would hope) after imploring the direction of the Holy Spirit, we cheerfully agreed to subscribe our names to the following covenant.

"As Christians, as ministers and as missionaries, we have been separately consecrated to God; we do now, in a united private capacity, not as an unmeaning ceremony, but with sincerity of heart, and with earnest prayer for divine assistance, give ourselves to each other. We enter into a holy covenant, by which we engage, with divine assistance, to keep ourselves from every employment which may impede our progress in the work, to which we are sacredly devoted. We are to live in love; to maintain the most perfect harmony of feeling, of design and of operation; to unite our strength, our talents and our influence, for the conversion of the heathen. We give ourselves to each other in all our *private* duties, engaging to make each other's interest our own at the throne of grace, and to strive together for high attainments in piety, for entire devotedness to the cause of Christ, for pure affections, for a humble walk with God. For this purpose we will endeavor to subdue every unhallowed, every ambitious desire, remembering that he, who would be the greatest, must be the *least* of all. In all things we are to be *equal*.

"We give ourselves to each other in the *public* duties of our office, uniting our exertions and our counsels for the extension of the Gospel of peace, endeavoring to be an example to the heathen, in every good work; and by a holy, humble and amiable deportment, to win them to the truth, as it is in Jesus.

"We will *never* separate unless duty very evidently require it; and then it must be by mutual counsel, and with Christian attachment.

"We give ourselves to each other in all our *afflictions, temptations and persecutions*, having our hearts knit together as the heart of one man, and performing all the duties of Christians and friends.

"And while we take this covenant upon ourselves, it is with earnest prayer, that in life we may *long* be united, and in death not far divided.

"PLINY FISK,
"LEVI PARSONS"

pp. 190—192.

For the remaining incidents in the life of Mr. Parsons, we refer the reader to Mr. Morton's historical account, and to the past volumes of the Missionary Herald. We shall only say, that Mr. Parsons arrived at Smyrna, about the middle of January 1820; went to

Scio, in May, where he remained, in company with Mr. Fisk, about half a year; returned to Smyrna in October; sailed for Jerusalem in December, where he arrived in February 1821; left Jerusalem on his return to Smyrna, in May; was seized with a distressing malady at Syra, in August, which unfitted him for labor, till the middle of October; in December, met his beloved companion, Mr. Fisk, once more, with whom he went to Alexandria, in Egypt; where he slept in Jesus, February 10, 1822. A letter from Mr. Fisk, published in the *Missionary Herald*, vol. xviii, pp. 218, 219, beautifully describes his last moments.—The following extract from Mr. Fisk's journal is given in the *Memoir*. It speaks of occurrences but a few hours before Mr. Parsons's death.

"Feb 9. This evening I sat down by brother Parsons's bed, and he requested me to repeat the hymn, 'There is a land of pure delight.' I added one or two concerning death, and some concerning heaven. He then said, I wish you would add one more, 'Show pity, Lord, O Lord forgive.' In the course of our conversation he said, 'If I were to live my missionary life over again, it seems to me I should wish to devote much more of it to reading the simple word of God, and, if any thing else, Scott's Notes. I regret very much that I have not spent more time in reading the word, of God, and especially the history of Christ.'

"While I am writing, my brother is asleep. When sick he often talks in his sleep, and has now been saying 'The goodness of God; growth in grace; fulfilment of the promise; and so God is all in heaven and all on earth.'"

p. 415.

"Never in this country," says his biographer, "has the death of a missionary occasioned more unfeigned and lively sorrow. I dare not affirm that the whole tide of sympathy was merely the result of attachment to him. Hundreds, probably thousands, who had never seen him, felt very deeply. With the name of Parsons was associated Bethlehem and Zion, Gethsemane and Calvary, the sacred sepulchre and the Mount of Olives, places, when all superstitious veneration is laid aside, most dear to Christians. They mourned not merely the removal of a distinguished missionary, but the loss of Jerusalem, of Western Asia, of the American church."

p. 420.

The Faculty of Middlebury College appointed a member of the Senior class to

deliver, at the annual commencement in 1822, a poem on the death of Mr. Parsons, a part of which, first published in the *Christian Spectator*, and afterwards in the *Memoir*, is here inserted.

"A voice is heard in Jerusalem;
'Tis the voice of pilgrims met for prayer.
A tear is shed in Jerusalem;
'Tis the tear of votaries weeping there.
The lamps still gleam in the holy tomb,
To chase away the midnight gloom;
And still is seen on Calvary
The place where once the Saviour hung,
And olives deck Gethsemane,
Where erst his hallow'd frame was wrung;
The harvest waves on Zion's mount,
The water plays in Siloah's fount."
There was an ear which heard the sound
Of weeping pilgrims' solemn prayer;
There was an eye which gaz'd around
Upon the hallow'd objects there;
There was a heart that long'd to see
The captive Jew from slavery free;
There was a spirit here below
With sorrow pierc'd for others' woe!
That ear can hear no more the solemn sound,
That eye is clos'd in death's oblivious sleep,
That heart has lost its quick elastic bound,
That spirit lingers not on earth to weep!
Where Nilus' fabled waters roll along,
Where Alexander's ancient turrets rise,
Thy spirit, Parsons, lur'd by seraph's song,
Spreads its untiring wing and upward flies.
There was thy dying couch at evening spread,
And thy frail form was there in peace repos'd;
Gently the slumbers play'd around thy head,
Till sleep's all-conquering hand thy eyelids clos'd.
Peaceful and pleasant was thy balmy rest,
As gels seem'd hovering o'er thy calm abode,
To bear thee to the mansions o' the blest,—
The presence of thy Saviour and thy God.
And they did bear thee!—Up the azure skies
Swiftly they sped on light ethereal wing,
To that bright place where endless pleasures rise,
And Eden blooms in everlasting spring.
No father near watch'd his expiring child,
No anxious mother stood his eyes to close,
No sister mourn'd with stenzied sorrow wild,
As from its clay thy sainted spirit rose.
What though no dirge is chanted o'er thy tomb,
What though no sculptur'd marble near it rise,
Thy name to rescue from oblivion's gloom,
And say—"Thy here departed goodness lies!"
Angels shall hover o'er on airy wing.
The passing traveller drop the pitying tear,
The mournful dirge the moaning breezes sing,
Of one to virtue's friends for ever dear.
Who now like him shall toil for Judah's race?
And who like him destroy Mohammed's sway?
Parsons and Martyr, lock'd in death's embrace,
Have spread the sou's glad wing and soar'd away.
'Tis God who guides the planets as they roll,
'Tis God who bids the comets far to roam,
'Twas he who summon'd Parsons' holy soul
From foreign lands to its eternal home.
He will remember Israel's fallen race,
He will restore them to their fathers' land:
Rich are the plenteous treasures of his grace,
And sure the wondrous workings of his hand.
Why weep ye then, O Zion's faithful friends?
Why mourn ye thus, who Parsons' memory love?
Our God, who here below her cause defends,
Has call'd him hence to purer joys above."

* See Mr. Parsons's description of Jerusalem.

American Board of Foreign Missions.

BOMBAY.

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF MR. NICHOLS.

THE lamented death of Mr. Nichols at Bombay, on the 10th of December last, was men-

tioned in the number for May, p. 137. Since that mournful intelligence reached this country, the Corresponding Secretary has received a journal of a short tour, which Mr. Nichols took with the Rev. Mr. Kenney, Church Missionary, in the early part of the last year; and