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The Education in the United States of Natives from Mission Fields.

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THE EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES OF NATIVES FROM MISSION FIELDS.

THE December number of *The Baptist Missionary Magazine* contained a suggestive article from the pen of Rev. Dr. William Ashmore, the veteran missionary in China, in reference to methods once employed in the prosecution of missionary work, found by experience to be unwise, and which have now been discarded. A portion of Dr. Ashmore's article, referring to the sending of natives to America for education, was selected for use in the last issue of the *Missionary Herald*, but was crowded out by the press of other matter ; and now the January number of *The Church at Home and Abroad*, the organ of the Presbyterians, has a long editorial upon the question : "Should natives be encouraged to come from mission fields to the United States for aid?"

The last-named article notices many things that are little understood in this country, or, if understood, are not kept in mind when deciding the question of aid to persons from a foreign country, namely : that the working-people of Asia are generally poor ; that a small sum of money constitutes a fortune for them, and the opportunity to secure such a sum here by a little tact is very attractive ; that Asiatics have learned that the spectacle of a convert to Christianity from heathenism is intensely interesting to people in America, and is a ready means of opening their purses ; that Oriental languages are interpenetrated with pious expressions which mean very little to those who use them, while they are a passport to the charity of liberal people ; that while they generally declare that their purpose in seeking aid is to secure the means to return to their own people and labor for their evangelization, many such persons become, on their return, the most successful opponents to the work, etc.

On the question of the desirableness of students coming to this country to pursue a course of study, the article says, first, that it is not necessary, because educational institutions of all grades have been established on mission ground, especially in Western Asia, from which most of these young men come. Colleges have been planted in Beirût, Constantinople, Aintab, Harpoot, and Marsovan, and also in Osioot in Egypt, and there are theological seminaries in Beirût, Marash, Harpoot, Marsovan, and Osioot, so that the opportunity to acquire a fair, working education can be enjoyed without crossing oceans or continents.

Secondly, it is not desirable to educate students here, save in very exceptional cases and for special work, because it costs so much, the money which would educate one young man here being sufficient to educate half a dozen there ; because their education and mode of life here take them out of sympathy with their people, and make it difficult for them to live as their people do and become an integral part of the growing evangelical community, hence unfitting them to work to the best advantage ; because the more expensive habits of living which they acquire make it more difficult, if not impossible, for their people to support them, and they thus become a serious hindrance to the realization of the very important idea of self-support in mission fields ; and because "it is demonstrable that few of the natives of Asia educated in America have been any aid to the evangelization of their own country, while many hundreds of well-educated and

devoted men trained in the institutions on mission ground are laboring in churches, dispensaries, hospitals, schools, asylums, editorial chairs, and charitable societies, and are the pillars of the rising evangelical communities which they adorn. These men have published cyclopædias, dictionaries, books on grammar, rhetoric, history, mathematics, natural, physical, and mental science, and are editors of scientific, literary, political, and religious periodicals. Their praise is in all mouths, and their influence on the rising fortunes of their native lands is conceded by the bitterest enemies of the truth." The article continues thus : —

"In view of these considerations, we think it the duty of Christians steadily to decline to aid by their contributions the students who may from time to time apply to them. A consistent adherence to this policy would prevent any from coming who have not means of their own to defray their expenses. With the great facilities at their door, no student from mission fields will be deprived of a thorough education at home."

Dr. Ashmore says : "The sending of natives to America to be educated for the ministry used to be considered a masterly stroke. The native could be associated with the finest young students we have at home. He would feel the stimulus of their mental activity, become possessed of their higher ideals, fix higher standards of attainment, and become in every way a broader man, while his mind would become more richly stored with the materials of thought. And so bright and promising lads were picked out and sent home. Not a society but had some of them on its hands ; other denominations were more forward than even we [the American Baptists] were. Any number of people were ready to make special contributions for the support of such young men. Besides, it was thought they would more than pay their way by the interest they would excite as they were taken round from church to church, and from Sunday-school to Sunday-school. And so they were taken through a collegiate course, and more or less of a theological course, and then sent back, petted and caressed, and laden with many small presents and souvenirs of their stay in America.

"In a few instances they did well ; but in others, and I think in the majority of cases, there was a disappointment even to the extent of bitterness. The young man had, indeed, become a broader man, but he had become so broad that he could not sit on the old-fashioned stool. He had to have a special chair made for him. He had been highly educated ; but somehow, he had been educated so highly that his old comrades could not always reach him, and he could not always get down to them. He could not work himself into the place he had been expected to take. The trouble was he was always trying to locate himself. He had not become an American, and yet he had partly ceased to be a native. He had acquired new tastes for food and garments and style generally, quite unknown to his plain neighbors, and was something of a 'speckled bird' in his native forests. His tastes being more expensive, he must have more support than his colaborers ; or, failing in that, he would have to go into government service, or engage in secular business. In fact, he was spoiled. He was neither one thing nor the other."

These declarations from two of the leading societies are fully confirmed by the long experience of the American Board. We have a deep sympathy for all those

who have received such a degree of enlightenment as makes them dissatisfied with their former state, and restive under despotism, and where the lack of enterprise and of facilities for bettering their condition and that of their families is so complete that they desire to improve their state by emigration. If they can do so without becoming a burden to others, we see no objection to it, except that their opportunities for doing good are greater at home than here. But with those who are planning to labor among their own people the case is different. Let them make the best use of the opportunities near at hand, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred they will do more and better work than by coming to this country to study. Of course the longer a man studies, the more he will learn. Many pastors would be glad of a post-graduate course at home or abroad, but laying aside all other considerations, is it a profitable investment of time? With habits of study, an advance in knowledge may keep pace with one's advancing years without a neglect of his appointed work. Success in evangelistic work depends more upon the heart than upon the mind; upon spiritual earnestness than upon the amount of learning.

It is a matter of constant surprise to us that good people in this land are so ready to give their money to foreigners who appear plausible, without stopping to inquire for their credentials; or, that they are satisfied with the testimonials of those whose opportunities for knowing the precise facts are little better than their own; that the absence of recommendations from missionaries or from the societies with which they are most intimately connected does not raise a suspicion that the case may not be just what it seems. In fact, the withholding of credentials is often ascribed to unworthy and purely selfish motives.

The missionary societies have been organized with the definite purpose of carrying the gospel and its attendant blessings to the lands that are in need of them, and of being the channels through which Christian benevolence shall flow abroad. All who have a desire to bless those in foreign lands with their money will find the existing organizations a wiser, more economical, and efficient medium than private and individual efforts; while the demands upon the societies are always far greater than their ability to meet them.