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An American Missionary Statesman

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DR. DIVIE BETHUNE McCARTEE

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Reprinted from
THE MISSIONARY REVIEW OF THE WORLD
APRIL, 1906

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
NEW YORK AND LONDON

1906

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AN AMERICAN MISSIONARY STATESMAN THE LIFE AND WORK OF DR. DIVIE BETHUNE McCARTEE

BY ELI T. SHEPPARD, LL.B.

The long and eminently useful career of Dr. McCartee in China and Japan, affords one of the most conspicuous and happy illustrations of the priceless value of high personal character, joined with comprehensive ideals, in the field of missionary effort. Students of missionary work, the world over, have been struck with the immense influence and subduing force of personal character in every department of that work. Not only the vigor, but the very existence, of American Protestant missions in the Far East seem to center about the personality of a few individuals like Drs. S. Wells Williams, W. A. P. Martin, McCartee, Hepburn, Verbeck, and Brown, — men supremely endowed with force of character combined with unselfish zeal and undying enthusiasm.

The history of American missionary enterprises, in both China and Japan, since the middle of the nineteenth century, affords a striking illustration of this providential fact, that, at the most critical epochs in those countries, men like these have been at hand; and their influence has been singularly instrumental in shaping the course of events, momentous in history.

During his fifty-six years of connection with China and Japan, terminated by his death in San Francisco in 1900, Dr. McCartee gained such

practical knowledge of the language, literature, laws, institutions, and religions of these countries, as only comes from long and intimate study and friendly contact. He believed the inward corruption and downward tendencies of Oriental life could be arrested only by Christianity; but that zeal and preaching alone would not effect these desired ends. Christianity must be not only preached but exemplified in many ways to produce a fundamental change in the national life of a people possessing an antique and petrified civilization, culture, and philosophy. The work of undermining the existing colossal fabric of misbelief, demands some methods different, perhaps, from those which may be successfully employed among races more rude and barbarous.

He did not think these highly civilized Asiatics would "fall like ripe fruit before the first breath of the Gospel." No one could be more assured than he, of the supreme importance of individual conversion in order to national regeneration; or more assiduous during the greater portion of his life in the East, in sowing broadcast the Gospel seed by direct evangelization, the printed page and informal converse. But, like his friend, S. Wells Williams,[†] he felt that many "subsidiary means" must be employed by Christianity to secure the

* Col. E. T. Sheppard, U. S. Consul at Tientsin from 1869 to 1876, was then, upon recommendation of President Grant, appointed by the Emperor of Japan as Adviser in International Law to the Japanese Foreign Office. This position he held until some time in 1880, when, on account of ill health, he resigned, and since then has resided in San Francisco. He is the author of valuable treatises upon consular service and extra-territorial jurisdiction. One of these, discussing the history, principles, practise, and abuse of *Extra Territory*, was published first as a series of articles in the *Japan Weekly Mail* in 1879. They were republished by the government of Japan, and translated into Chinese by Dr. William A. P. Martin, then of Peking. A second pamphlet is made up of lectures on the *American Consular Service*, delivered before the College of Commerce of the University of California in March, 1901, and published by the University Press. Col. Sheppard has also issued an important address on the *Future of the Pacific Ocean*. All these writings are peculiarly pertinent to the present relations of the United States with the Far East, and deserve to be issued together in a permanent and accessible form.

H. W. RANKIN.

[†] See "Life of S. Wells Williams," p. 180.

real advance of its own principles, and their incorporation in the social organism. Scientific agencies, legitimate commerce, the telegraph, railway, school and college, newspaper, hospital, and the very presence of foreigners could all be made to serve the interests of the Gospel. Dr. McCartee was no believer, however, in what is known in the Orient as "the gunboat policy", nor did he countenance any form of compulsion as a Christianizing adjunct; but was conscientiously opposed to such a reliance upon the "worldly arm of flesh."

"American missionaries," said he, "will make slow progress in China, so long as they continue to invoke the interposition of their consuls, or call for the presence of gunboats on every trivial occasion. This gunboat policy only serves to deepen the hatred and distrust of the Chinese toward foreigners generally, and missionaries in particular, by reminding them that the missionary is forced upon them."*

Some years later, an inverted echo of this sentiment came from the Tsung-li-Yamen at Peking: "Take away your missionaries and your opium," said Prince Kung, "and we can live together in peace." On another occasion, Dr. McCartee expressed, on the subject of extra-territoriality in China, views sensible and just.

"It is the boast of Christian nations, that their citizens living in China and Japan carry with them their own national laws and customs, are exempt from the local laws and customs, and are accountable only to the jurisdiction of their respective consuls. In

too many instances this doctrine of extra-territoriality is abused, with the result that the local laws and municipal regulations of the Chinese are flagrantly disregarded by foreigners in the country. This assumption of foreign national superiority is exceedingly galling to the Chinese government and people, and it is a frequent reminder to them that their country is in danger of passing permanently under the dominion of foreign nations."

Dr. McCartee was well versed in the literature and principles of international law, and his words recall the eloquent historic opinion on this subject, once pronounced by the greatest Lord Chancellor of England:

"When the Roman citizen carried with him his rights of citizenship, and boasted that he could plead in all the courts of the world, '*Civis Romanus Sum*,' his boast was founded, not on any legal principle, but upon the fact that his barbarian countrymen had overrun the world with their arms, and reduced all laws to silence, and annihilated the independence of foreign nations."

Dr. McCartee was not alone in thinking it anomalous, that after twenty centuries the maxim which the pagan Roman regarded as "the badge of universal subjection which their warriors had fixed upon mankind," should be adopted as the maxim of Christian nations in their intercourse with non-Christian states.†

Dr. McCartee was liberal minded, widely cultivated, widely experienced among men, yet unmistakably animated by religious aims. He regarded Christianity as primarily a religious force, establishing, first of all, normal

* Comp. Circular Letter addressed to all the Consuls of the United States in China, by the former minister to China, George F. Seward, dated Peking, March 3, 1875.

† Dr. McCartee had no doubt that as a provisional measure only, and pending the reorganization of native administration, extra-territorial and consular jurisdiction in a country like China was a necessity to justice. But he wished the provisional character of the practise to be plainly avowed by foreign governments, and understood by natives, as an incentive to native reform; while his indignation at the great abuse of the system by foreigners was quite in sympathy with that of the Japanese and Chinese.

relations between man and his Maker ; but, by this very fact, also preeminently a civilizing force, creating the best possible conditions between man and man. The missionary he thought of as emphatically the advance herald of a higher and better civilization, one that is or may be dominated by Christian ideals. Stationed at the outposts of the pagan and Mohammedan world, and representing the spiritual side of life, he should hold aloft in one hand the Book of Life, and in the other the torch of science ; not that these are of equal value, but must go together. There should indeed be a suitable division of labor, according with the fitness of men. There is work for the cleric, and for laymen, and for women, too. But in many ways, the missionary enterprise must be prepared to lend a hand in helping up less favored nations. It should follow up the precepts of the Gospel by introducing a knowledge of arts and sciences, and exemplify the social ethics of Christianity in whatever kind of work the exigencies of a particular field demand.

Dr. McCartee's life-work was, perhaps, the most lucid and satisfactory illustration of his own ideal. From the beginning of his active career, in 1844, as a missionary doctor in Ningpo, until the close of his long life, we see him constantly reappearing in fields and forms of usefulness other than those conventionally dedicated to missionary labor ; but always working definitely in one direction. His old colleague at Ningpo, Dr. Martin, says of him in a recent letter :*

"I never knew any man who combined in so high a degree the labors

of an author, preacher, and medical practitioner. In the earlier days of the opening of the ports, his services as a physician were called for on all sides ; not by missionaries and Chinese alone, but by the mercantile community and foreign shipping. In his versatility and untiring energy he seems to have been made for a pioneer ; while his long tenure of a consular post contributed much to his influence among the Chinese."

And the Anglican Bishop of North China, the Rgt. Rev. George E. Moule, who also knew him well in Ningpo, writes of him : †

"Taken all in all I suppose no missionary has more worthily upheld the character of his profession. I have always regretted that missionaries should ever consent to accept a political appointment. Much, I know, may be said on the other hand. But Dr. McCartee's singleness of aim in all relations of life was so conspicuous, that his tenure of a consular office can have done nothing but raise the credit of Christianity, and American Christianity, in the eyes of both Mandarins and people. In those early days (1844-1858) access to the higher Mandarins was denied. I doubt, indeed, whether down to the time of the Taiping troubles (1861-2) the business brought up to English and American consulates, was not conducted through the agency of a petty officer called Yung-tung, inferior in rank to a Chien, or district magistrate, who himself is two grades below the Tao-tai, or Intendant, with whom almost exclusively Ningpo consuls now do business. But my recollection is that Dr. McCartee, through his medical skill, Chinese scholarship, and especially his character as a Christian gentleman, had won access to more than one or two of the wealthy and cultivated classes, living in and near Ningpo. If he had had something of the self-assertion which characterized some

* To his Biographer, dated Peking, February 5, 1902.

† To his Biographer, from Hangchow, June 26, 1901.

others, and less of the sense of humor which gave a charm to his conversation, he would have left a deeper mark upon the literature of missions, and in the various fields of research. But my impression of him is that no one of my missionary acquaintances won, and retained to the last, a warmer or more respectful regard from his brethren of all denominations, and from the Chinese of all ranks."

We recall his slight, simple, almost pathetic but always dignified figure—a mere drop in the great ocean of Oriental life and movement, sinking now and then completely out of public view, to reappear as often in some other and important role of activity; and as repeatedly working out results which, humanly speaking, seem now little short of miraculous.

In another place,* Professor David Murray, former Adviser to the Imperial Department of Education in Japan, has contributed an interesting memoir of Dr. McCartee, and especially of his labor there in that department. Few, if any, of the distinguished corps of American and European scholars, engaged in the educational department of Japan, have obtained greater recognition and none occupied a wider place of usefulness and influence. It would be difficult to say in which of several branches of learning he most excelled; but no one obtained a larger meed of admiration and personal esteem, whether from his pupils, his associates in the University of Tokyo, or his employers in the government of Japan.

It has been lately said of him by the Viscount Tanaka, then Vice-Minister of Education:†

"All his success in connection with our education was partly due to the

wide range of his learning. But he was a man to be respected as a teacher and trusted as a friend. He was true to himself as well as to others; and whatever he did, he did it with a profound sense of responsibility. His good work for the education of Japan in the first stages of its development is never to be forgotten."

I enjoyed an intimate acquaintance with Dr. McCartee during those years of his life, and my position afforded exceptional opportunities for observing the character, methods, and influence of his labors. From 1872-1880, Japan was passing through the most critical period of her transition from the Old to the New. The whole empire was undergoing a social revolution, so complete, momentous, and swift, that the very speed seemed to threaten the extinction of the national consciousness. Indeed, many shrewd observers, altho wishing the Japanese well, feared the nation was rushing to destruction. It was a singular spectacle; the hermit empire of the changeless East, suddenly caught up in the whirl of Western progress, and rushing headlong in the race of this new destiny! A complex social phenomenon so entirely unparalleled in history was well calculated to excite the gravest apprehension as to the final result. Dr. McCartee believed that Japan could not import a new civilization as a man might buy a ready-made suit; that no foreign civilization grafted upon an Oriental state could live and thrive unless assimilated to the native parent stock. Moreover, altho immense changes in the inner life of such a highly sensitive people might indeed be effected from without, yet no mere exchange of one materialis-

* In the *New York Observer*, July 17, 1902.

† In a letter to his Biographer, dated Tokio, September 21, 1902.

tic civilization for another could bode any good, unless both were interpenetrated and fused by those principles and ideals which Christianity alone supplies. And these principles, to become generally accepted and operative, must be embodied in lives able to counteract the deep, prevailing, instinctive, and no less well deserved distrust, suspicion and aversion directed against foreigners in the East.

The Christian religion in China and Japan, in both the common and official mind, has inevitably been associated with the political designs of the West, with the arrogance and aggression of foreign states; with the greed and duplicity of foreign commerce; with the opium and coolie traffic; with the personal insolence and brutality which for 300 years the natives have suffered at the hands of foreigners from Christian lands; with the infamous lives of great numbers who claim the protection of supposedly Christian governments. All this the Christian missionary must offset by such a life and work as shall conciliate these Eastern peoples, not only to his faith, but to the very presence of an Occidental. Nothing can better accomplish this than such exhibitions of Christian character in secular affairs as must profoundly convince pagan minds that the best friends their country has are those who are Christians indeed.

In his view there was no conceivable condition of society in which Christianity was not better for any people than Mohammedanism, Buddhism, or Confucianism. Yet his profound knowledge of Oriental literature, philosophy, and history made him aware that the East possesses some institutions, and its wisdom many maxims, little inferior to those of the West.

He refused to ignore the virtuous aspects of these ethnic teachings, the sanction lent to them by a venerable antiquity, or the powerful hold which they have upon Oriental character. On the contrary, he emphasized all points of agreement between these teachings and those of Christianity. He always aimed to meet the native Chinaman or Japanese, peasant, merchant, officer, or scholar, upon his own ground; and then to show how Christianity satisfied needs which, while partly recognized, are wholly unprovided for in the pagan teachings. But to enlarge upon the antagonisms involved appeared to him mischievous; while the unquestionable merits that belong to those nations and systems he recognized cordially.

This function of conciliation, and the promotion of a mutual understanding between all parties concerned, was exemplified by him with notable success in public diplomacy, in which field he smoothed the way for negotiating some of the most beneficent treaty provisions between China and Japan, indirectly affecting the relation of these countries with the Western Treaty Powers. His part was in the background and mainly unofficial—that of a confidential counsellor, whose assistance was sought and highly valued by those officially concerned. For this reason, what he did was not known to the public then, and can not yet be fully told. It is better known that, in the final suppression of the coolie traffic in 1872-3, one of the most inhuman evils of modern times, this humble missionary doctor was a very considerable factor; and it was not by accident or chance that in the adjustment of international disputes between China and Japan he

came twice prominently to the front. His recognized experience and efficiency in the consular service of his own country at three different ports of China, his established reputation for fair dealing and flawless integrity in both private and official relations, his great scholarly attainments, his urbanity and piety, combined with a rare aptitude for diplomatic business, more than once attested in the official correspondence of the United States, rendered him a conspicuous figure of his time, and marked him out as one pre-eminently suited for diplomatic employment. Besides this, in the first days of the University of Tokyo, where his chair was properly that of natural history, he for three years taught Justinian's Institutes, Pomeroy's Municipal Law, and the elements of the Law of Nations.

But all this work, however important, was extremely unobtrusive, and not widely known; and in a private letter he remarked that Dr. Martin was probably correct in saying once of him that he was "a man jealous of his reputation, but indifferent to fame." Perhaps no other foreigner ever divided so many years between China and Japan, so nearly even in the attention given to the interests of both, and continued during his visits to the United States. Certainly no other foreigner was ever better situated for understanding these two countries in their mutual relations, and points of comparison and contrast. No other ever served both countries with more loyalty to their best interests, or received a larger measure of confidence from the natives of both. Too true a friend not to rebuke their faults, he appreciated the excellencies of both, and in many ways sought to bring about the best mutual understanding.

For nearly three years, 1877-89, he was Foreign Adviser, with rank of Secretary, to the first resident Legation of China in Tokyo. But the Far East as a whole, was always present to his mind, and his conception of needs, and adaptation of service, were those of a true Christian statesman.

The Viscount Tanaka Fujimare, ex-Vice-Minister of Education, and ex-Minister to Italy, a warm personal friend, knowing exactly his standing among the Japanese, in the letter above referred to says:

"Dr. McCartee was thoroughly acquainted with Japan, its language, its literature, and its people." (In regard to the Loo Choo affair of 1879:) "You are right in saying that when he acted as Adviser at the time of the first Chinese Legation, he contributed much toward the peace between the two countries. I and my wife used to call on Dr. McCartee and family very often while here, sometimes staying with them for several hours. We were very much struck with their beautiful home life."

Dr. McCartee was not called a statesman, and there were eighteen out of fifty-six years in which he was not called a missionary. But if in truth, and aside from merely professional distinctions, such a man is not a statesman or a missionary, then who is? How obviously great beyond measurement, and Christian beyond doubt, the influence of such a life! He never would accept or retain a position that involved the smallest compromise of his Christian faith. As a scholar, physician, diplomatist, missionary, and gentleman, he was greatly admired; but his fame will be chiefly due to the example afforded by his spotless life of that godliness, righteousness, and self-oblivious kindness, which perfect the man and exalt a people.