

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE MISSIONARIES

To the Rev. William Arms and Rev. Titus Coan, Missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to the Heathen.

Dear Brethren;

The mariner every year visits the western Shores of Patagonia, braving the rough waves and incessant rains, in pursuit of seals; and recently some officers of the British navy have traced the unparalleled intricacies of that coast, for the benefit of commerce. But the most interesting field of inquiry yet remains to be explored. *Man*, in Patagonia, though found around almost the whole extent of coast, and possibly in [2nd page/] many parts of the vast interior, immortal man has been in great measure overlooked. Little is known respecting his character and habits; except that, in the east, he roams on horseback over the boundless pampas; while, in the west, his life is spent in a canoe among the islands. If he has fixed habitation, to which he resorts at stated seasons, and where are the graves of his fathers, as it would seem he must have, we know nothing about them. Nor are there any data, by which we may estimate the number of human beings in that great country. Nor have we any certain information concerning their religious opinions and feelings. Living in the ends of the earth, they are unknown to the rest of the world: and where is the disciple of Jesus, who ever shed a tear over their hapless condition as probationers for eternity

But the time has come, in which the moral condition of every part of the world must be made known to the church. The church must become acquainted with the [3rd page/] ground she is to occupy, and the work she is to do. The most remote and inhospitable countries, if the abode of human beings, must be visited by the Christian traveller, and all its spiritual necessities be made known to those whose duty it is to relieve them.

Through the public-spirited generosity of *Silas E. Burrows*, Esq. of New York City, you will receive a gratuitous passage in the Mary Jane, captain Clift, to some convenient point on the western coast of Patagonia, and you may rely upon the influence of that gentleman to secure you the friendly assistance of the several ship-masters in his employment, whenever you are in circumstances to need and receive such assistance. Your drafts upon the Treasurer of the Board, as a remuneration for the favors received from them, will be duly honored; and the Committee cherish the hope, that in some way the gracious Lord, at whose command you go on this mission, and who is everywhere present, will be pleased to provide for all your wants. Your minds, however, should [4th page/] be prepared for singular privations -- for hunger, cold, nakedness, perils in the wilderness, and perils in the sea, that you may endure them with all long suffering and patience.

In case the vessel touches anywhere in Eastern Patagonia, you will learn as much as possible with regard to the inhabitants, always taking care not to expose yourselves to the danger of captivity; but the field you

are to make the special object of inquiry, is *Western Patagonia*. There, you will use all proper means to gain the desired information concerning the native tribes, from the southern limits of Chili to the Strait of Magellan.

The Chart, drawn by Capt. King, under direction of the British Admiralty, of which you are furnished with a copy on a larger scale than the original, will be of essential service to you, and to the vessel in which you sail. It presents indeed one of the most broken coasts in the world; yet it demonstrates that vessels may find complete protection from the Pacific, by means of islands and archipelagos extending nearly 400 miles, from the Magellan Strait to the Gulf of Penas.

Your first endeavor will be to ascertain as precisely as possible the places of most frequent [5th page/] resort for sealing vessels: especially for those belonging to the generous patron of this exploring mission. You will also have a good understanding with Capt. Clift: of whose disposition to aid you we are assured, so far as will comport with the success of his voyage. You may find it is expedient at first to remove all your effects to the shore; and circumstances may render it highly important for you to have an occasional resort to vessels; and when the objects of your mission are attained, you will of course need a conveyance either to this country direct, or to Valparaiso where you may soon find a vessel bound to some port in the United States. (You will be furnished with the means of bartering with the natives; with a travelling tent of the most approved construction; with a small boat, should the captain of the Mary Jane advise to one, and be able to take it; with the means of procuring fish from the waters, and game from the land, for your food; with bills on our bankers in London and letters of credit on a mercantile house in Valparaiso, to be used in case of necessity; and with a letter to the commander of our naval squadron on the western coast of South America. But [6th page/] after all, the chief hope of the Committee is in the merciful providence of the all-pervading all-powerful Lord of Missions, who can crown your self denying enterprise with success, and return safely to your native land at the appointed season.

How much time you shall bestow upon the islands, and particularly the large island to which the name of Wellington is given on the chart, it will be for you to determine after passing the Strait. On the northern extremity of Wellington island lies the Guaianeco group, of which captain Morrell gives a very flattering description in a letter which you have seen. Here he recommends the establishment of a mission. In his published journal, he also recommends a mission on the Peninsula of Tres Montes, which is somewhat farther north, but perhaps too near the papal mission, in the Archipelago of Chiloe, to render it the most desirable location. He represents the natives as to be found in considerable numbers among the islands of the western Shore, and on the Strait; and his account of the country, as a whole, is certainly very favorable. Yet it is not to be denied, that the descriptions we have seen of the country are not all by any means [7th page/] reconcilable. All however, represent the coasts and islands as inhabited. The climate is undoubtedly humid to an extraordinary degree; but it does not appear to be unhealthy; and Capt. King, in a paper read before the Royal

Geographical Society of England, represents the atmosphere of the Strait as possessing some peculiar quality favorable to vegetation; as he observed tender plants blossoming at a temperature of 36°, uninjured when the mercury was several degrees below the point of congelation; and flourishing, indeed, through the long and severe winter. He states, also, that during the summer, he occasionally spent the greater part of the night at his observatory, with the thermometers both within and without, as low as the freezing point, and yet, though not warmly clad, he did not in the least feel the cold; and in the winter, with the thermometers, on similar occasions, at 24 [degrees] & 26 [degrees], he has not suffered any inconvenience. Such facts as these cannot be uninteresting to men, who are expecting to become familiar with the snowy cordilleras and tremendous glaciers of those high southern regions.

To the Committee, as at present informed, it seems most desirable that you should [8th page/] leave the vessel somewhere between the latitudes 47 [degrees] & 48 [degrees] S; yet they give no positive instructions on this point. Looking continually by prayer to the Father of Light for direction, your movements must be regulated with constant reference to circumstances and events, very often unanticipated. It must be impossible to traverse the western shore by land, as the waters of the Pacific reach the very base of the Andes, and flow far into the deep ravines that wind through its ramifications. The Cordillera itself, however, is not elevated generally above 3,000 feet, &, with the help of natives, may no doubt be crossed. At a considerable distance from the place of your proposed debarkation, on the more northern and elevated ridges of this chain, dwell the Araucanians, renowned in Spanish history and song. They belong to the noblest race of savage men, and every friend of man must desire that their national independence may long be preserved. Whether you will be able to reach them, is scarcely probable, nor do the Committee advise that you should make the attempt. But are there not other tribes of similar character, farther south? This inquiry they wish you, if possible, to answer. It will be important to know, also, whether the pampas of Patagonia, and their races of horse men, extend as far westward as the [9th page/] base of the Andes; and what are the character and habits of the mountaineers: whether warlike, or peaceable; whether they are a nomad, or an agricultural people. You will note their towns and villages; their institutions, customs, manners, and their religious sentiments, so far as you can ascertain their nature; and will judge whether it be expedient, at present, for the churches of this country to establish a mission among them, and indeed anywhere in Patagonia. In case you think a mission advisable, you will enable yourselves to give the Committee all that precise information, which they will need in order to fit out and commence the mission under the most favorable circumstances.

The tradition among the Spaniards, mentioned by Ovalle, in his Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Chile, of a nation in the interior of Southern Patagonia descended from Europeans, and called Cessares [Cesares, Ed./], will be worthy of some attention.

Whatever be the result of this mission in respect to yourselves, let it be remembered, that the privations, hardships, and exposures, to which you will probably be subjected, & which appear so formidable to many of

your [10th page/] friends, *are extraordinary only in the history of missions*. In the history of commerce and of science, they are common and familiar scenes. Almost a century since, De la Condamine and Bouguer spent six months in a desert of South America, near the equator, contending night & day with incessant rains, that they might measure an arc of the meridian; while Maupertuis, in pursuit of the same object, thought nothing of the bleak and snowy precipices of Norway. And how many sufferings unto death have been cheerfully endured in Africa, to solve the problems of the Nile, and of the Niger? What contempt of sufferings and danger have been evinced by the explorers of a Northwestern passage? The surveys of Capt. King on the coast you are to visit, were extended through the space of four years, and notwithstanding wind, and rain, and sleet, and snow, his officers spent much of their time, for successive days and nights, in open boats. And from what part of the world, and by what amount of privation and peril, is commerce deterred from sending her missionaries, for exploration and for traffic? From none. They [11th page/] are even now *going forth into all the world*. Let the missionary of the cross go where he will, he will find that they have preceded him. Let him experience any amount of bodily sufferings; it may probably be found that they have already experienced the same, or greater sufferings, among the same people. It is lamentable that the church should make so much of personal sacrifices, endured for the glory of Christ and the salvation of men, when the world accounts them so little, endured for the sake of wealth, or fame.

Go, Dear Brethren, believing that your enterprise is in no respect a work of supererogation. You do only your duty; and may your example be the means, under God, of raising the tone of enterprise in the churches.

You have no political designs whatever, and will every where deport yourselves as the subjects of a kingdom, which belongeth not to this world. Your whole object is, *to ascertain whether the Gospel of salvation through Christ Jesus can be preached to the degraded inhabitants of Patagonia*. On such a mission as this, being unquestionably [12th page/] in the way of your duty, you may plead the glorious promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Yes, Dear Brethren, He who has all power in heaven and on earth, will be with you. In your darkest, most desponding hours, he will be with you. Should neither of you be allowed to revisit your native land, still he will be with you, and will sustain you in your dying moments, and make you rejoice in all you do and suffer for him.

The Committee expect you to keep separate journals, and to embrace every opportunity for communicating the general results of your inquiries for their information.

Having completed the grand objects of your researches, so far as shall be possible, you will embrace the first convenient opportunity for returning to this country; and on your way home, will find time to prepare a joint report of your mission.

In all your intercourse with the natives, you will of course take every opportunity to make them acquainted [13th page/] with the Gospel; and

the Committee earnestly desire that your inquiries may be the means of its permanent introduction into the benighted regions of Patagonia.

By order and in behalf of the Prudential Committee.

Missionary Rooms, Boston, July 27, 1833.

B. B. Wisner, R. Anderson, David Greene. Secretaries