

## THEODOSIUS VANDERKEMP

*Who Went as a Missionary to Africa, When Past Fifty Years Old (1799-1811)*

IT is never too late to make a fresh beginning if Duty calls. This famous Hollander, who was born at Rotterdam in 1747, became eminent as scholar, soldier, and physician, before he became the only medical missionary in Africa, at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Dr. Vanderkemp's father was a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. His son studied at the University of Leyden, and was well educated. He spent sixteen years in the army, where he was captain of horse, and lieutenant of dragoons a valiant soldier.

Leaving the army, he went to Edinburgh. Here he became distinguished for his attainments in the modern languages and natural sciences. You can see that he was a very learned man. By and by he went back to Holland, and practiced medicine with great success. It seems that he could do many things well.

A great sorrow came to him in the death of his wife and child in a shocking accident. This led to his becoming a Christian, and turning his thoughts to service for Jesus Christ. He offered himself as a missionary to the London Missionary Society for work in South Africa. He was ordained as a minister, and sailed in 1798, *when past fifty*. He went in a convict ship, and busied himself on the voyage in ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of the convicts.

After laboring in different places, and being ordered by the king to leave, with sixty followers, after establishing one station, Dr. Vanderkemp began special work for the Hottentots. In seven years those who gathered for worship numbered fully a thousand. The cruelties of the slave traffic so distressed the good doctor that, in three years, he paid \$5,000 to redeem poor captives. Finally, by his efforts, aided by others, the Hottentots were made free. It was said that this missionary was wonderfully like the apostles of the early Church.

His service was not long, for he died in 1811, after only about twelve years in Africa. For a hundred years the Kaffir converts were called by his name. Dr. Moffat said of this brave missionary: **“He came from a university to teach the poor naked Hottentots and Kaffirs; from the society of nobles, to associate with the lowest of humanity; from stately mansions, to the hilt of the greasy African; from the study of medicine to become a guide to the Balm of Gilead; . . . and from a life of earthly honour and ease, to perils of waters, of robbers, and of the heathen, in city and wilderness.”**