

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

SEVEN YEARS IN THE INDIAN MISSION FIELD.

(Continued.)

The government of Aryavarttha had become a fully developed system when Alexander the Great entered India, B.C. 334, by way of the Khyber Pass, and through the sterile plains of Afghanistan. This expedition, besides being a military one, was also of a scientific character, as in his train were surveyors, naturalists, historians, artists, and poets. In fact, it is the first scientific expedition upon record. He wished to observe and possess himself of all possible information regarding the people and the land, in order to bring them within the range of his great scheme, viz., that the whole of the East should yield obedience to the magic of his government. He planted Greek colonies in India, to which he granted municipal institutions, and established a vigorous system of international policy between Macedonia and the East, which continued until the conquest of Mahomet and the Arabs.

It is from European data that we now obtain much of what we know of ancient India, and the drifting history, hitherto unfixed by dates, finds firm anchorage. From this time the country received the name of Hindustan, after the river, which, for the first time, was explored from its source to the sea.

Alexander penetrated inland as far as Delhi, which he entered in person. He subdued and plundered the west coast; and here, long afterwards, we find traces of the doctrines of Christianity having been taught, probably by Christians who fled hither during the days of persecution in the early Church.

In the seventh century after Christ the Parsees—a band of refugee Persians—having been driven forth from Persia by the conquering Caliph Omar, on their refusal to accept the religion of Mahomet, entered India at Goudjerat. The Goudjeratis received them kindly, allowed them to settle in their midst, and granted them liberty to practise their religion according to their own modes, only exacting in return a promise that they would adopt the costume of Goudjerat, to which the Parsees readily agreed, and to this promise they still strictly adhere. In their religion they worship the one true God under the symbol of the elements, especially fire, and with a ceremonial closely resembling that of the early Vedas. They are mostly of the merchant class, and fill much the same place in India which the Jewish money-lender does in Europe. The wealthy assist the poor among them, and they never feel ashamed to own one another, whatever their station in life. They are clever and far-sighted, and in most cases refuse utterly to discuss religious subjects. They tell you that as a friend they welcome you, but if religion is your theme go to the priests, it is their business to discuss and not that of the laity.

Last of all came the Arab invasion which spread itself over the whole land, and the weird, monotonous cry of "God is God, and Mahomet is the prophet of God" rang from the Himalayas to the Vindhias. These troops were composed of a vast medley of Arabs, Turks, Afghans, Moguls, and Persians. Their descendants, with the Hindus whom they forced to become proselytes, still number over forty millions of the population of North India. Yet the Mussulmans can never be said to have amalgamated with the Hindus; they have never sank into the inner life of the nation as did the Aryans in the earlier days among the Drevadians. It is still a case of oil and water.

The Rajpoot chiefs of Central India were the last to yield and the first to throw off the yoke of this new power, our own Indore among the number.

Such is the Hindustan of to-day. Drevadians, Hindus, Parsees, and Mohammedans mingle together in the business of life and in the common market-places, but they neither eat together, dwell together, worship together, nor do they intermarry. Although they all understand and make use of the popular tongue of the district abroad, yet in their homes it is different; there they retain the language of their fathers. They are sundered also at the grave. The Parsee is borne to his "tower of silence," within a consecrated enclosure, where the feet of the vulgar may not tread. The Mohammedan is carried upon a rude stretcher of ropes, woven about two poles, which are

raised upon men's shoulders, to the grave. The Hindu is laid upon the funeral pile and consumed to ashes. As distinct are they to-day after the centuries have passed which record the history of their crowded millions, as are the different grains which lie swept together upon their earthen threshing-floors.

From the Arab invasion the Hindu reckons the veiling of their women and the habit of secluding them. Handsome Hindu ladies were constantly being forcibly seized and carried off by the lawless Mussulman soldiery, and there was no appeal and no redress for wrong done to a Hindu. Veiling became a stern necessity. The rich Hindu gentleman naturally would not allow his ladies to go abroad at all, but if an absolute necessity occurred they were obliged to go strictly veiled and protected. Thus a custom, which necessity at first made imperative, in time crystalized into a rigid etiquette, and the men were no more strict regarding the matter than were the women themselves. Of course, in quarters where the Mohammedan power and influence were strongest the veiling custom was most emphasised. Those, therefore, in the North of India and in Bengal, continue these practices in a modified form up to the present time, but on reaching the central table-land we find the Mahatta lady wears her veil, draped Spanish fashion over the glossy braided wheel of hair which stands out from the back of her head; and they do not object to mingle in a quiet way with at least European gentlemen. Those of Brahmin caste and holding the highest positions of rank and influence among the native aristocracy have done so frequently in my own house at Indore. As a matter of fact those who in Central India affect the veil and are secluded are mostly emigrants from the north, and had been habituated to it before they came to the south country.

In Indore the wife of the Prime Minister, Lady Rao, a Brahmini, never covered her face in public, neither do the Parsee ladies, nor the wives of the principal courtiers with whom I am acquainted.

If any time you request a woman to do something, and she does not feel inclined to comply, these customs will no doubt be pleaded in excuse, trusting you are too ignorant to dispute them, but my own experience has been that strict veiling in Indore is practised most rigidly by the old and excessively plain women. If for any reason a native lady has had her nose bitten off by a tyrannical husband she is pretty sure to be a veiled woman ever after, except some of our English army surgeons persuade her to allow them the pleasure of constructing a new one for her by cutting and moulding a portion of the living flesh from some other part of the body for the purpose. Quite an extensive work in noses is carried on at the Indore Native General Hospital. I have myself seen six organs, in various stages of progress, there at one time. One case last year was such a decided success as to shape, etc., that the proud and happy surgeon insisted on having a photograph of the reconstructed member as a professional trophy.

Of Indian caste much has been said and written, whether always wisely or not. On this subject the late venerable and lamented Dr. Wilson, of Bombay, remarks: "India stands not alone in this. Nations and peoples as well as individuals have, in all countries, in all ages, and at all times, been prone to take exaggerated views of their own importance, and to claim for themselves a natural and historic and social superiority to which they have had no adequate title. The higher communities and classes of men, ungrateful to providence for their advantages when real, have looked with contempt and disdain on the lower, while the lower have looked with envy, jealousy, and depreciation on the higher. Comparatively few individuals, indeed, except under the liberalizing and purifying influence of our holy faith, have been able sincerely to adopt the language of the Roman poet: 'For descent and lineage, and the things which we ourselves have not accomplished, these I scarcely call our own,' or of the orator who said, 'The loftier that we really are, the more humbly let us conduct ourselves.'" — Caste had not bound the people of Aryavarttha more firmly than does public opinion the Englishman of to-day. It was only gradually that the Brahmins began to hedge themselves round by social laws and customs so as to secure lasting advantages to their own order, and it took resolute determination and method united to penetration and cunning to develop caste into the system which at present obtains. It is not to be wondered at that the educated Hindu dreads breaking caste in the minor, and, even to him, foolish details

into which it runs. It is the only moral law they know, and if it be granted to break it in one point, to where may not this liberty be carried. A native high court judge, of Allahabad, said to the late Miss Wilson, of the American mission there: "Give us the Bible with its decalogue and system of morals, then, and not till then, can we break caste; it is all we have, do not ask us to give it away until you provide us a substitute. What that substitute is we know, the question is how is it to be given so as to reach the greatest number in the shortest possible time intelligently and effectively." I should say give them God's written word, and let them alone with it. The Old Book may be trusted to do its own work, while we watch and pray, but it will be a slow process, indeed, if they have to pay for it at the commencement. A thing must be known to be valued; they do not know the Bible. It is not to be expected that a man will willingly invest in foreign literature (for such our Bible is considered to be) who subsists himself, and perhaps keeps a family, on sixpence per day, and there are millions of such in India.

A thorough system of primary education is spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land. Government is urging forward village schools, where young lads by the hundred will at least be taught to read, although they may still laugh at you for saying the world is round for a few more generations; but it is in the hearts of these young boys that we must sow the seed which will in time spring up to the Master's glory. Our hope is in the children. We know how hard it is, even in Christian lands to work among those who are aged and bound by years of sinful habit, even where public opinion is with us, conscience, what is left of it, is with us, and fashion is with us; then how much harder must it be when, united to the natural depravity of the heart which has been matured in sin, we have all these things against us. We do not work among ignorant barbarians, but among thoughtful, sceptical, reasoning, intelligent men—ever speculating, ever anxiously questioning, regarding man's soul, and the universal soul, and the means by which perpetual transmigration may be escaped. They believe in the eternity both of soul and matter. Of the soul they reason: "If any entity is eternal it can have no beginning or it must have an end. Hence souls, both supreme and individual, whether they be regarded as different or identical, have always existed and must ever exist. Mind," they say, "is an internal organ of sense, a sort of inlet of thought into the soul, belonging only to the body, and quite as distinct from the soul as any external organ of the body. The soul united to the body becomes conscious of personal existence and individuality, and is capable of receiving impressions pleasurable or painful. Then it commences acting; all action, good or bad, leads to bondage, because it entails a consequence, hence it must be rewarded or punished. For, observe, that the heavens of the Hindu system are only steps on the road to final beatitude, and the hells, though places of terrible torture are merely temporary purgatories."

It may be interesting to subjoin a few of Menu's moral precepts, as given us by Professor Monier Williams:

"Daily perform thy own appointed work
Unwearily; and to obtain a friend—
A sure companion to the future world—
Collect a store of virtue, like the ants
Who garner up their treasures into heaps;
For neither father, mother, wife, nor son,
Nor kinsman, will remain beside thee then,
When thou art passing to that other home—
Thy virtue will thy only comrade be.
Single is every living creature born,
Single he passes to another world,
Single he eats the fruits of evil deeds,
Single, the fruit of good; and when he leaves
His body, like a log, or heap of clay,
Upon the ground, his kinsmen walk away;
Virtue alone stays by him at the tomb,
And bears him through the dreary trackless gloom."

M. FAIRWEATHER.

MISSION WANDERINGS IN MANITOBA.

Sixty miles south from Winnipeg to Emerson, fifty more westward to Mountain City—a region often described in mission letters before—were easily passed over, and on Tuesday, 24th August, two travellers were to proceed further west through a terra-incognita—so far as either of them was concerned. The two missionary travellers were Rev. Mr. Pitblado, of Halifax, who is endeavouring to obtain a knowledge of