

THE OUTLOOK OF INDIAN MISSIONS.

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(Continued from our April number.)

NATURALLY our next inquiry is, "How far has the reception of Christianity affected the moral life of our people?" We have a right to expect, that when people throw heathenism aside, the new tide of life will be evidenced in the morals of the people. Here again we have cause for satisfaction. The C.M.S., and other missionary agencies, have laid so well the foundations of law and order, that the law-abiding character of our Indians has almost become a proverb. Everywhere life is not only absolutely safe, but where Indians are found, there you will meet those who will help the traveller when in need and will share their last morsel with another when famine walks through the land. Spite of all that prejudiced persons may say to the contrary, we believe that as to purity of life and honesty in regard to property, our Indians, as a whole, rank very high.

The criminal records of the country reveal a wonderful absence of crime; and a large proportion of cases are attributable more to ignorance, or the influence of heathen superstitions and customs, than direct disregard for the law; and it is remarkable how seldom any Indian belonging to a Christian band comes under the eye of the law. In almost every instance where this is the case, drink is at the bottom of the trouble.

From this survey of the past and of the present condition of things, we may now proceed to scan the future.

(A). What of the spiritual life of our people? I think it needs no special prescience to see certain dangers which threaten. Probably many of our missions will for a long time be undisturbed by any serious peril; but sooner or later there will come the seemingly inevitable heresy or delusion to try the faith of our people in their bibles, their church, or their ministers. Some as we know are threatened now. It has been bad enough all along to have to guard the people from what we believe to be the mistaken teaching of Romanists.

But now, with the increased facilities for travel, all sorts of pitfalls beset the way of the Indian. The unhappy divisions of Christianity are making themselves felt. Men, whose zeal is often only exceeded by their ignorance, are sowing seeds of doubt and mistrust. The sacraments of Christ's own ordinance are travestied; the plain teaching of the Apostles is set at naught, or at least is thought to be of less value than that of some man, who, by his own confession, has only known what Christianity is and does for ten or twelve years. The Bible is

torn to pieces to suit the notions of those who call themselves Bible Christians; and utterly ignoring all that history proves, they deny the need and the power of Christian ministry. Some of our workers have already had experience of the influence of such ideas upon their people. Others will have it to encounter; and the question is, "Are our people prepared for these attacks upon their faith?" I must confess one cannot feel very confident that all will come out of the attack unscathed. The very simplicity of the people will add to their peril, and a plausible tongue may in one day disturb the faith it has taken years to implant. What, then, must be done to prepare ourselves and our people against these possible trials and perils?

(1). First, what of ourselves? To do good to the souls of our Indian brothers and sisters is or should be the great object of our lives. Unless this is so, there is no reason for or purpose in our work. We are missionaries, messengers, sent to men with the most important of all messages. It is not ours to tell them of earthly gain or to fire their minds with ambitious schemes; but to draw out their souls to Him whose name is Love, the great mystery whose existence they have rightly guessed, from the visible manifestations of His love and providence. We are the accredited agents of Him who is a Spirit, whose every act has reference to the eternal welfare of His creatures, whose will it is that not one of these simple children of His should perish; of Him who so loved them, that he sent His son to open for them as for others, the way of salvation.

Dear friends, this is a tremendous responsibility. If it were ever borne in mind it would save us from many mistakes and much that makes against the honour of our Master. God only knows how much of the seeming failure to reach the souls of our Indians, is owing to the lack of true consecration in His servants. I am well aware of the difficulties which beset us; but, believing as we do that His strength is made perfect in weakness and can overcome all obstacles, we dare not plead such difficulties as our excuse for any failure of duty. My brethren, as I look forward to coming days, full of problems and responsibilities, I am convinced that never in the history of our work, has entire consecration to the work been more necessary than it will be then. As we meet here let us prostrate ourselves before the Master who has honoured us with this high calling, and pray that upon us there may come a Pentecost; that henceforth our hearts may flow with burning love, with ardent zeal, with a consuming devotion which shall drive out all selfishness and indolence and make us all that our Master wishes us to be.

(To be Continued.)