

IV. Education in Foreign Countries.

1. EDUCATION IN BENGAL.

At the recent meeting of the Social Science Association in Dublin, Mr. Rakhol Das Haldar, a native of Bengal, read a paper entitled "Education in Bengal, and its results." More than half a century has elapsed since the first effort was made for diffusing the European system of education and European knowledge in that portion of India known as Bengal. Some millions of money have been spent towards that object, not only from the Government Treasury, but also from the private purses of members of the British nation. Some hundreds of persons have devoted the best part of their lives in securing the same object. It may, therefore, be interesting to residents in Great Britain and Ireland to have some idea of the result of the expenditure of money and of energy and talents for social amelioration in Bengal. In speaking of the early stages of British education in Bengal, the mind is carried back to the days when books like the "Young Man's Best Companion," and "The Universal Letter Writer," were in vogue. Such books were imported into Bengal long before the close of the last century. There were no public schools for English education. Those who wished to make themselves serviceable to the English used to read the above books at home, taking lessons probably from their employers. Such men generally belonged to the highest castes in Bengal, the Brahmin, the Kayasth, and the Vaidya, whose chief ambition was to be clerks. It was considered highly unbecoming for a man of an inferior caste to aspire to a clerkship. The acquirements of those who learnt English were so indifferent, that the students could not even write a sentence of their own with correctness. The extent of scholarship was to be able to read the tales of the Thousand and one Nights, whether intelligibly or not. There were no Anglo-Bengali Dictionaries in existence, so that the students were obliged to collect words for their own use. These collections, in the form of manuscript vocabularies, descended for some time from the senior to the junior members of the same families, and were the sole help towards expressing their ideas. Anecdotes are told and laughed over at the present day, how ludicrously the Bengalis of former days spoke and wrote the English language, and it is wondered how their English employers could at all manage them. As the chief object of the greater portion of those who studied the English was to be copyists, great attention was paid to penmanship; and in this comparatively unimportant branch of English education the Bengalis were scarcely inferior to the English themselves. No impression, however, was made on their minds by the example of English life, nor by the perusal of English books. Their religious prejudices were not shaken. They contented themselves with deciding that God had established different religions, manners, and customs for different races of men, and what was good for one nation was not so for another. They thus preserved their caste in all its integrity, and so faithful were they to their erroneous beliefs that they would not drink a drop of water or eat a morsel of food without changing the clothes polluted by the touch of Europeans. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at, that when a proposition was made for establishing public schools, the Hindus in Bengal were very much averse to it. They said that a tolerable knowledge of the English language was so far necessary as a means of livelihood; but what would be the use of public schools? If a person wished to be a learned man, he should go to the Professor of Sanscrit, and be taught the divine Shāstras. But an English school would not only be useless, but might possibly be injurious to the interests of Hinduism. Of course the proposition for the extension of European knowledge in Bengal had originated with Englishmen and Christian Missionaries; but it was not without the support of a few sagacious natives like the Rajahs Rammohun Roy and Radhakant Deb. Before the year 1820, the Hindu College in Calcutta, the Missionary College at Serampore, and a few minor schools, were established in the face of opposition, and a perseverance of fifty years has changed the state of things in Bengal. The prejudice which was at first supposed to be insuperable, has been broken down! In the beginning free pupils were sought after, but at present, not only are applications from pay pupils numerous, but also, as a fact strongly illustrating the decay of prejudices, many young Hindus may now be seen dissecting dead bodies in the Calcutta Medical College—an act no Hindu would have dared to perform fifty years ago. It is a pleasing fact to British philanthropists that men, natives of Bengal, may now be found by hundreds holding converse with the great ones of the earth, with the mighty spirits that lived to instruct and humanize them, with the philosophers, poets, mathematicians, and orators of Europe—men who, without English education, would probably have been seen worshipping idols, and leading a most indolent, if not vicious life. English education has created a class of men called "Young Bengal," an epithet originally applied as a reproach. The educated natives of Bengal have been appointed by the Government

as uncovenanted civil judges and magistrates, and in various executive capacities, and they have not merely been found equal to these appointments, but have been considered by local British officers as capable of higher trust. Formerly "public spirit" was never known or understood; but it has been so far developed, that natives may now be seen establishing schools, libraries, debating clubs, hospitals, and other institutions for the common good. To the diffusion of European knowledge is to be attributed the rise of a class of natives who are considered still to be low in caste—he alluded to the social advancement of the artisan and manufacturing classes. Members of these classes can vie with the Brahmins and others in respectability and intelligence. A word or two about female education might not be inappropriate before he concluded the subject. The condition of Hindu women is pretty well known in Great Britain and Ireland. Still, there may now be found Hindu women able to read and write, and a few literary compositions by female writers have already appeared in Bengali periodicals; but the female schools have hitherto been failures. Even the Calcutta Female School, founded under the auspices of the late Hon. Dr. Drinkwater Bethune, has not answered to the expectations originally formed of it; its present number of pupils, if he was informed aright, was not more than ten. As to the cause of female education not having made a steady progress, it may be mentioned, that the superstitious Hindus do not educate their daughters, simply on account of prejudices, while the educated natives respect too much the popular opinion. The time has not yet arrived in Bengal, when a gentleman will marry only a well-educated and accomplished lady. Such is a rapid view of improved education in Bengal and its results. The money and talents expended upon it have not been wholly thrown away. So much has been done as to promise a better and brighter future. It is, however, only by a prolonged course of salutary discipline, aided by friendly external influences, derived from a free people and an enlightened Government, and carried on through several generations, that his countrymen could hope to reach a standard of character that would fit them for all the dignified occupations and pursuits of civilized man.

2. EDUCATION IN DENMARK.

The Altona correspondent of the *Morning Post* gives an interesting account of the state of Education in Denmark. He says:—

In every parish there are at least two, and sometimes three or more, primary schools, which are under the charge of teachers who, according to the proposal of the municipal or communal council, as the case may be, in the town or country, are appointed either by the Bishops or by the Minister of Instruction, but who before their nomination must undergo an examination in an establishment specially formed for their training and instruction. The attendance at these primary schools is compulsory on all children between nine and fourteen years of age, at which latter period they generally receive the rite of ecclesiastical confirmation. The instruction which they receive includes reading, arithmetic, and writing, besides religious training, and lessons on the elements of geography, on the history of their native country, and occasionally also on matters connected with natural history. It is a very rare circumstance to find any one, even among the poorest, who cannot read and write; and among the army recruits there is scarcely one who is not possessed at least of these accomplishments. In the primary schools of Copenhagen a somewhat more extended programme of study has been recognized, though in the gratis schools there the usual branches only are taught; but in these schools where the parents pay a certain portion of the expense, mathematics, drawing, &c., are also included, and it should be remarked that the attendance at these schools is very large, because even poor parents look upon it as an affair of honour to contribute something, be it ever so little, towards the payment that is required for the instruction of their children. In this way the numbers who attend the public schools of Copenhagen amount to nearly 7100 scholars of both sexes, which is a very large proportion when the extent of the population is considered. Some years ago an idea struck one of the teachers, that it might be possible to procure for the children attending these schools an opportunity by which they might have the benefit of physical recreation during the holidays, by having them transferred from the less healthy atmosphere of a large city to the purer air of the country, while they would at the same time be withdrawn from those temptations which idleness in a town often presents. In concert with some of his colleagues, he made application in this spirit to various persons in the country, and his appeal to their hospitality was most successful. The clergy, landed proprietors, farmers, and even peasants, hastened to intimate that they would be most happy to receive such children; and those who had the management of the railways and of steamboats, likewise gave their aid to the project by offering gratuitous conveyance to these young passengers. The King also had the kindness to put a great many carriages at the disposal of