

MISSION FIELD.

Letter from Trinidad.

For the Review.

TUNAPUNA, TRINIDAD, Nov. 30th, 1894.

Since my return from Great Britain, part of a copy of one of your numbers for 1894, page 340, date lost, has fallen under my notice. That page contains a paragraph headed "Young Missionaries," which is liable to be misunderstood and fitted to do injury to the cause of missions. For that reason and that only, do I notice it. In the first sentence you tell your readers that "Dr. Cust the venerated member of the Committees of the four chief proselytizing societies of Great Britain, has published the results of his long experience and devoted labors in the Protestant cause, experience gained during twenty eight years of continuous devotion to the missionary cause." Your description of Dr. Cust, and of the Societies of which he is "the venerated member," is rather vague and peculiar. But passing over that "twenty eight years of continuous devotion to the missionary cause" is regarded as entitling him to speak with authority. And this is the substance of what he says, as quoted by you, from the *London Weekly Times*:—"If Dr. Cust is grieved by the false sensationalism of missionary methods at home, he is more deeply pained by the comfortable secularity of many missionaries abroad. It seems to him, and he very plainly states the reasons of his belief, that the missionary vocation has degenerated into an easy means of subsistence to numbers of half educated youths of the lower middle class who want an income upon which to marry young. Early marriage appears indeed from these pages to be one of the common incentives of the missionary life. One of the frequent hindrances to missionary work, and one of the chief causes to the misapplication of missionary funds. 'Some missionary societies and training colleges,' says Dr. Cust, 'have become mere matrimonial agencies. The young public servant in India does not marry directly he lands in the country, and yet lives a holy life, he waits until he has learnt his duty and mastered the language by living among the people. Why should not young missionaries exert the same measure of self-denial?' We have here a certificate of character to our civil servants in India; and a stern condemnation of 'many' missionaries. Our comment is:—"This testimony, in regard to the moral life of our public servants in India is valuable as coming from an eye witness who passed a quarter of a century in the closest personal contact with them, and whose own deep religious convictions would have made him intolerant of delinquencies." That is, you accept gladly on behalf of the civil servants, and leave unquestioned the truth of the facts, and the wisdom of the opinion, expressed concerning the missionaries. Both are so extreme that I doubt their correctness. The one is too good, the other too bad, to be true. The charges brought against many missionaries are, their "comfortable secularity;" their "lack of zeal," "the missionary vocation has degenerated into an easy means of subsistence," and their want of "self-denial" or self-control, leading them to become missionaries for the sake of an early marriage. This accusation is one to blast the character of every missionary against whom it is proved. The guilty are spoken of as "many" "numbers," the low-mindedness as "common," transforming training colleges into "mere matrimonial agencies," and contributing, as "a chief cause" to "the misapplication of missionary funds." The country named is India, where we have an important mission. The luke-warm and the ill-informed, not to speak of the Philistine, may take this testimony of a friend, published, without reservation or limitation, in a friendly paper, as an admission most damaging to the cause of missions generally. If taken for true as it stands, it is well fitted to check liberality, in contributing to a cause so mismanaged by committees, and misrepresented by unworthy agents. Let us have the facts sifted, and all evils reformed; but in the meantime let us remember that even a well-meaning man, may be carried away by some personal bias.

I have been twenty-seven years a missionary, and have met many missionaries from many lands, but my experience does not at all agree with that of Dr. Cust. I have, so far, failed to find mission work "an easy means of subsistence." I know a young man who postpones marriage, and declines the easy living of which Dr. Cust speaks, because, knowing the work well, and with the example of many missionaries before him he considers his experience too limited for so weighty a responsibility. Two of the men who came to this field positively refused to marry though the Foreign Mission Committee urged it, as, in their opinion, desirable both for the

work, and the workers. Two of us are separated from our wives now, for our work's sake. Dr. Cust seems to regard a wife as an encumbrance to a young missionary, and a source of expense to mission fields. The missionary should go out alone, "learn his duty and master the language" alone, get acclimated alone, and when all these difficulties are over, then, and not till then, marry. But what is the gain? Will he not learn his duty and master the language more quickly with a wife to learn with him. Some women learn, to speak languages, more readily than their husbands. Will not that be a stimulus? If both are to go through a time of discomfort, while the northern microbes in their blood die, and the southern are introduced, had they not better go through it together, rather than the one after the other? And how is the missionary to get a wife after his years of probation are over? Is he to select one before he goes out, and keep her waiting, because she will hinder his usefulness at first? Is the Mission Committee to select a wife for him, and send her out, as framed houses are sometimes sent out, for the comfort of homeless missionaries? Is he to find a wife in the field—a dark-eyed Hindu, or mayhap the sister of some well-behaved civil servant? It may so chance, but rarely. Or, at the end of eight or ten years, is he to come home to seek a wife? I think I see him, browned with the Indian sun, reserved, almost an old bachelor, writhing under well meant suggestions, about excellent Christian women, who would make admirable missionary's wives. Perhaps after so many years it does not much matter to him who becomes his wife, or if he marry at all. If he could do without a wife so long, when everything was so new and hard, what great matter is it, now the work is part of himself. I can heartily sympathize with the man who, in such circumstances, waits for some sign from heaven, to show him whether he is to marry, and whom.

But if the missionary on furlough considers it his duty to seek a wife, and after two or three months of imperfect and hampered courtship, asks one, and is refused, is he to go on, in cold blood, to ask others? If missionaries are to be monks, say so clearly and distinctly, that we may know our vocation. That theory, if mischievous, is at least consistent. The theory that missionaries should, or at least may marry before they go out, as held by our Foreign Mission Committee, is also consistent and it sets woman at her true worth. But what shall we say of the theory, which appears to be advocated by Dr. Cust, that a wife is not worth her salt—only an expense and hindrance, until a missionary has "learnt his duty and mastered the language." Only a man, and a man who had served on many commissions, would have proposed to economize on such a theory. Our Canadian women in their hearty support of missions would, I am sure, repudiate such mean measures. After all, are not a full-orbed manhood and womanhood, sanctified by grace, chief qualifications for the men and women who are to elevate the home life of the heathen. The young woman, perhaps the choice one of some holy home, wooed and won, is ready to go, but some man, of many committees, forbids it because it will cost money, and she will be worse than useless at first. Is that the way to develop the Christian manhood and womanhood of those, who are to spend their whole lives, as your representatives, in the Foreign field? Is that the policy to draw out the large-hearted interest of the women at home? Though faddists, now and then, bring up such suggestions, we have no such rule in Canada, and it is not true of your missionaries, that numbers of them are selfish worldlings, or of their wives that they cause a waste of mission funds, and hinder the work of their husbands. Were the secrets of our homes and work told, the Church would see a very different picture from that of Dr. Cust; and the women at home would glorify God on behalf of their sisters, who, far from home, proved so devoted and true, in time of trial.

JOHN MONTON.

Christian Mela, Central India.

The annual Christian Mela for 1894 was held in Rutlam from October 27-30. The best praise I can give it is to say it was better than that of last year at Mhow. It was more than ever a Mela of, for and by the native church. A spirit of enthusiasm and unity prevailed throughout; the meetings were well attended, the papers were carefully prepared and well delivered, and the discussions on them were earnest and practical. The outside Evangelistic exercises also were more enthusiastically entered into this year than ever before.

Rutlam, though the youngest is one of the most interesting and most promising of our stations. In spite of being in some ways rather backward, its external appearance is pleasing, its officials also are friendly, and the importance of its situation is daily increasing, for here railway lines converge from three, which will soon be five, different directions. Its choice for the Mela was happy in its being the most central of our stations. We have no mission buildings in Rutlam and our being unable to rent any that would be suitable, necessitated the meetings being held in a large *shamiana*, or square roofed tent, kindly lent for the occasion by the state officials. Many of the missionaries and Indian Christians