

MISSION FIELD.

At Leamington, on Nov. 29, the Speaker of the House of Commons, presided over a meeting held there in favour of the S.P.G. Society. He said that when he was invited to do so, he felt he might take the chair, and express, so far as he could interpret them, the views of laymen respecting the work and action of this great Society:

The attitude assumed by the laity with regard to Missionary Societies was one of half-heartedness, not that they underrated their importance, but because they thought the subject might be left to the clergy. Ordinarily they took only a feeble and languid interest in them, and their attitude was one of coldness and apathy; but every now and then they were roused to enthusiasm by the narrative of some heroic act performed by a Missionary, by the massacre of Bishop Paterson, or by the melancholy and tragic death of as great a hero as ever fell on a battle-field, the Bishop of East Equatorial Africa, Bishop Hannington. There were two objections to foreign Missions which he should summarily dismiss, because he did not think they were now seriously entertained. One prevalent in the early part of the century was that Missions were useless to any nation until it had attained a certain amount of civilisation; and the other was that Missions came under the category of associations, and, like all associations, had a political tendency, and therefore were dangerous to the State. Some people doubtless held that before going abroad to savage people there was work to be done at home. That every one would admit, and that there were as great Missionary heroes in the east of London, in the slums of great towns, and even in small country villages throughout the country, as ever died in Africa or were speared by savages.

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel had a double mission; it was not only a Missionary Society in the technical ordinary sense, but it also sent spiritual consolation wherever Englishmen collected in foreign parts. It followed the flag of England wherever it went, and sometimes preceded it, and was the first pioneer of civilisation and of humanising ideas. It penetrated wherever the English spirit of adventure went, and left its permanent mark of good in wild, desolate, and savage regions. There were vast countries, certainly where little impression had been made as yet, of which India was an example. Many would say it was right and proper to subscribe for Missions to India, because there the people were not savage, but highly educated and cultivated, and had religions as ancient as the Christian faith. Their religions were hemmed round by a hedge of exclusiveness; they had their priesthood and castes, and they resented, naturally perhaps, the invasion of what they considered their exclusive domain. These exclusive religions of the world would have to be taken in

hand by Missionary Societies before the Gospel could be spread over such vast countries as India. What, it might be asked, had Missionary Societies done for India? He took it that they had done a great deal, and that those who in India had ruled over thousands of our fellow-subjects there, would not adopt a low tone in speaking of the religious societies in India. They would speak very distinctly of their humanising and evangelising tendency; they would say that though the results may not yet be palpable to the human eye, yet there was at work among the immense populations of that vast Continent a great heaven, which would in time leaven the whole lump. Sir Richard Temple said, that excluding the two great religions of the East, there remained 27,000,000 people, who were, therefore, directly and immediately accessible to the preaching and the teaching of the Gospel. He had purposely abstained from enforcing the claims of the Society as he might have done, because, as a layman, he assumed its enormous importance, and recognised the Divine injunction to spread the Gospel. Since this Society was established, what vast portions of the globe had England not conquered, or annexed, or penetrated by her pioneers of adventure and commerce."—From *Mission Field*.

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