

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

HOME LIFE IN INDIA.—IV.

BY FAIRWEATHER.

India is essentially an agricultural country, and compared with its population has few large cities. Those containing upwards of 50,000 inhabitants are only forty-four in number. The great masses of the people live in villages, and practise what we shall term *communal agriculture*. The manufactures of India are comparatively insignificant, so that the revenue almost entirely depends upon the cultivation of the soil, and whatever therefore affects the welfare of the peasantry must of necessity be of vital importance to the supreme Government.

From the earliest times until the rise of the British power these villages had ever been left to their own resources as regards internal regulations, the supreme Government only requiring at their hands (1) the maintenance of peace and order, (2) the payment of the annual revenue tax, (3) whatever extra assistance either in the shape of military aid or money the emergencies of the nation demanded. Beyond these points the villagers kept strictly to themselves and had little to do with the rulers at all.

State interest in the land during the old Hindoo period was fixed at one-sixth the average produce of the soil. After the Arab invasion this legal standard was doubled, and one-third the average was exacted. British law, I think, assigns itself one-fourth or twenty-five per cent. These revenue taxes were not levied upon the individual, but in a lump sum upon the whole village, each village bearing what was considered its share of the whole according to its wealth and importance. The *head man* was constituted *collector*, for which service he received a certain percentage, and thus his honesty and co-operation were secured to the Crown. The Mohammedans interfered but little with the workings of the village system which before their time had greatly endeared itself to the people. But law at Delhi, and the *executive* in the hands of unscrupulous mercenaries in the distant provinces, were unfortunately very different matters, and hence we read of the most terrible injustice and oppression during this period. For the slightest offence, and often for no offence at all, the old Hindoo nobility and gentry were thrust out from their possessions that their estates might be conferred upon Mohammedan courtiers and favourites. Justice seems never to have been a consideration when it interfered with the avarice or pleasure of the conquerors. The British, from the very commencement, made every effort to restore these estates and endeavoured to do the Hindoos justice as far as it lay in their power. Investigation soon shewed, however, that such a thing as *documentary titles* to property did not exist, thus all schemes for restitution had to be abandoned. Whenever the English authorities turned their attention to a property they were immediately beset with a multitude of claimants all ready to swear false oaths or produce forged documents at the shortest possible warning. The *Saddar Courts* at Calcutta were literally crowded to overflowing, and the Judges at length gave up in despair, utterly unable to unravel the miserable tangle into which a long period of misrule had brought the land. At this juncture Lord Cornwallis, formerly Governor-General of Canada, brought forward his famous "Permanent Settlement Act" of 1793, to the effect that all who could be proven to have been in possession of lands for a period of *twelve consecutive years* were confirmed in these lands under two conditions, viz. 1. Prompt payment of the land-tax; 2. Proper cultivation of the estates granted. Neglect of either of these conditions equalled ejection. These restrictions the Hindoo landholders determined to resist until compelled to obedience. They had not yet learned that the British meant what they said, nor the sure retribution which follows the breaking of the laws of the land, and so it transpired that upon the breaking out of the Mutiny in 1857 almost every estate in Bengal and the North-West had already changed hands. It was not until 1859 that the British Parliament decided in favour of the Ryots and granted to them legal *documentary titles*—not deeds—confirming them in their possessions. After Christianity this Act is acknowledged to have been the greatest boon which English rule has brought to India, inasmuch that with *order* naturally came *safety* to life and property.

The great poverty of the land is undoubted, unrelieved, deep-seated and chronic; the main cause being simply *over-population*, aggravated by (1) our suppression of infanticide; (2) our putting an end to local feuds; (3) the loss through maintenance of an expensive foreign government; (4) the loss through the large sums of money annually remitted to England as pensions, etc., for which India receives no direct equivalent; (5) to this add the heavy additional loss through *exchange* in the transmission of these sums; (6) we may put as a sort of climax the price of the occasional expensive blunders, such as the Afghan war, which the English may heap upon the head of the Hindoo, in all of which matters he has no voice or power to control, he is only asked to furnish the *money*. Let us not wonder then when the native takes the small revenge of an occasional sixpence from the master he is forced to serve as a common man, while he really supports him. Looked at from the native standpoint these are a few of the reasons why they consider our Government a burden, and of the wide-spread discontent which tills the hearts of the Hindoo people.

IN THE NORTH-WEST.

MR EDITOR, I arrived here last Friday night at half-past eight o'clock, and was met at the station by Professor Bryce. A preparatory service was in progress in Knox Church, conducted by Mr. Robertson, which I was able to attend for a little, and was gratified to hear the names of fifty new members read out by the pastor, swelling the active membership to over 400. Last year 145 names were added. The church is a fine building, and with its noble spire, is seen to advantage from every direction. It is a credit to our denomination, and speaks well for the energy and zeal of both pastor and people.

Before speaking more particularly of our great mission work in Manitoba, in whose interests I have come, it may not be out of place to revert to the marvellous growth of the city and suburbs. Eight years ago, when I visited the Province, Winnipeg was but a straggling town of some 2,000 inhabitants. To-day it is variously estimated to contain from 10,000 to 13,000 inhabitants. A correspondent of the Chicago "Tribune," who has been sent to make observations in the country (in his first letter, published last Wednesday), presents a full and very impartial picture of the present condition of affairs, from which I extract the following, as the testimony of one who certainly has no motive to exaggerate. He says:

"Manitoba, the Prairie Province, and Winnipeg, its capital, with several changes of proprietorship and vicissitudes, have had two distinct epochs of history—one about sixty years long, from the grant to Lord Selkirk in 1811 to the formation of the Canadian Confederation in 1870; and the second, from that event to the present. The first was a long period of torpor and slow growth, crowded with wild adventure and romantic incident, but unmarked by signs of material progress and advancing civilization. The second period has been one of considerable growth and swift material development. Single branch of semi-barbarian commerce has been succeeded, with the rapidity of a panoramic change, by all the varied industries of a civilized people; a settled political system has succeeded a species of feudal land-proprietorship. When Manitoba was taken into the Dominion in 1871, the population of Winnipeg was only 200 or 300. The growth has been steady since 1871, varying little from about 1,000 per year. With the establishment of the Provincial Government, Dominion land-offices and railroad headquarters began disbursements of large sums of public money, which have continued in increasing amount. They have been a powerful artificial stimulant to the natural growth of the Province, and have increased the population of the city tenfold, while that of Manitoba has increased from 17,000 in 1871, to 40,000 this year. The trade of the Province has certainly grown fivefold to tenfold in ten years, though in its chaotic primitive condition there is a lack of positive statistics. But the customs duties for this year are estimated at between \$300,000 and \$400,000, against some \$67,000 in 1874. The exports arrive by two channels—the Pembina Branch Railway and the Red River, on which five or six steamers ply in the summer months. The interior trade is in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company, which has lines of steamers upon Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan, and trading-posts scattered over the whole immense region stretching to the Arctic Ocean and the Rocky Mountains; and two private lines of steamers upon the Assiniboine.

"Immigration, upon which the future of the North-West depends, has been steadily increasing since 1877, though as yet it is inconsiderable in comparison with what future years must bring. The immigration for the present season, now about half finished, numbers about 4,000, of whom the Commissioner of Immigration believes about two-thirds are from Canada, and the rest from Great Britain.

"Emerson, the first station across the boundary, from a mere customs-post, has grown to a prosperous town of regular streets, stores, churches, and public buildings, whose importance is apparent, even from the railroad crossing on the other side of the river. Winnipeg, as I saw it upon my ar-

rival here a week ago, bears upon its municipal countenance obvious marks of the wonderful changes of the last ten years. A city has succeeded a trading-post; the Province has trebled in population, and its capital has grown tenfold; railroads have brought emigration and commerce; and all the varied pursuits of agriculture, trade, and manufactures are crystallizing about the growing centre of national life. Ten years ago Winnipeg awoke from a lethargy of half a century to the vigorous, palpitating life of a modern commercial city, almost in a day. As yet, the whole has a raw, unfinished look, like the stage of a theatre behind the curtain when the scene is being shifted. The old picturesque landmarks are in course of obliteration, and the new city that is growing up on their ruins has not taken definite form. Fort Garry, the most conspicuous feature in the old town, has been surrounded by new buildings; and the old wall that surrounded it has been torn down to furnish material for the foundations of brick blocks; a fine steam mill has arisen on the plateau below, and a substantial iron wagon bridge is spanning the Assiniboine at the very gates of the fort. The prairie west of the fort is taking shape as the popular residence section, and many fine brick residences are rising upon the bank of the river and the adjoining plain. All the residence part of the city presents an air of thrift and prosperity, and there is a notable absence of squalid shanties. The public buildings and recent business blocks are solidly built of brick. The only part of the city that retains anything of its ancient aspect is the French Catholic suburb of St. Boniface, across the Red River from the main town. This is the episcopal residence of Bishop Taché (whose authority extends over the whole North-West), the site of St. Boniface College, and the favourite residence of many wealthy citizens. It is a charming spot, with wide, regular streets, and attractive cottage homes."

What I said in my last letter regarding the speculating and money-making proclivities of Chicago, applies to Winnipeg and the Province. Men are here from all parts of Canada, and indeed beyond the limits of the Dominion, bent on trade, and hoping, by some lucky venture, to become millionaires in a day.

To give your readers an idea of the immense increase in the value of real estate, I may state that the site selected for the new Manitoba College of our Church, bought in April last at \$6,000, could be sold to-day for \$18,000. One gentleman whom I know (now in Ontario), bought a block on Main street in 1873 for \$10,000, and holds it to-day at \$120,000. Personally, I do not much envy the good fortune of such men, but I could wish that some far-seeing Presbyterian had purchased a few central blocks in the city at the nominal values of 1872, and gifted them to the Home Mission Committee. We should now be in the position of such rich corporations as Trinity Church and the Reformed Church in New York city, with an annual income more than sufficient to meet all our present demands. Perhaps, however, it is better that we should be directly dependent, for the promotion of God's work in this great land, upon the liberality of God's own professed people.

On Saturday afternoon we drove towards Kildonan, returning in the evening to the city. On this evening, after the labours of the week are over, the main street is literally crowded and the stores filled with purchasers. There is no lack of "saloons" and "sample rooms," which do a thriving business, evidently among the floating population. Sabbath morning was still and peaceful beyond expectation. There were very few found in the streets, and as the hour of eleven o'clock approached numbers from all directions were seen going towards their respective churches. It was the usual quarterly communion in Knox Church, which was filled throughout. The centre seats in the area were packed with communicants, while the side seats were filled with adherents, or strangers temporarily residing in the city. The galleries were also filled, principally with young men, of whom large numbers attend Knox Church. In the evening the building was filled to repletion, chairs being put in the aisles to accommodate numbers that could not otherwise be provided for. Such congregations, we are told, are not exceptional in our church in Winnipeg, for in the winter season the attendance is even larger than in the summer.

The necessity of forming another congregation to meet the demands of the city has been under consideration for some time. Mr. Robertson's appointment as Superintendent of Missions will hasten this desirable end. Different proposals are before the congregation, and as these are to be discussed this evening I may be able to inform you in my next of the decision arrived at. It need hardly be said that no more important or desirable field can be found in the whole Dominion for a man of energy, ability and self-denying spirit, than the capital of the North-West. His influence will not be confined to his own congregation or the city, but must be felt by the thousands of emigrants who are daily passing through to other districts beyond. It is admitted by all that the Presbyterian is