

on the all-important subject of religion. Wholly withdrawing its direct countenance and support from all Hindoo and Mohammedan shrines, let it openly and frankly avow its own belief in Christianity. While it proclaims anew the unchangeableness of its policy of neutrality, or non-interference with every other faith. Such a candid avowal, coupled with such a proclamation, would help to dissipate the spell of mystery and delusion which its past ignoring or virtual repudiation of the Christian religion has tended to throw over the universal mind of India, filling it with the strangest suspicions, gloomiest fears, and most sinister apprehensions; in a word, let us see honesty and disinterested kindness, manly firmness and unimpeached fidelity, strong common sense and Anglo-Saxon energy, rise to their proper ascendancy in this sorely-distracted land; and out of the soil that has been savagely drenched with the blood of massacred British matrons, maidens and children, will yet spring forth the stately monuments of a glorious, consolidated British dominion." But be that as it may, we are this day called upon, as the members of the Church of Scotland, to lament the loss of one, the most zealous of missionaries, as he was the best of Christians, cut down prematurely in his usefulness, and, with his wife and child, most brutally slain. It was not to gain for himself the wealth that perisheth in the using, or to fight the battles of his country and win its applause, that Mr. Hunter urged his way into the deepest recesses of heathen idolatry. Other and different were his motives, and other his aims. With a single eye to the glory of Him whose servant he was, he had devoted himself, at no external bidding, but under higher suggestion, to the honorable calling of a missionary, and, selecting India as the place of his adoption, had offered himself to the service of the Church. My first interview with him is yet fresh in my memory, when, bearing a note to me from his own clergyman, Dr. Glover, who spoke very highly of his piety and worth, he made known to me his desire of being placed at the disposal of the India Mission. His services, I need scarcely add, were most gratefully accepted. For some years previously a considerable sum, gifted by a generous donor, had been in the hands of the Committee, to be appropriated in establishing a mission to the Sikhs; and, as everything seemed settled in the state of the Punjab, and the prospect of continued peace and order in that distant Province of the British dominions was universally cherished, it was at length resolved that the intentions of the donor should be carried into effect. The Punjab was now to be added to our stations abroad; and after the most careful consideration of his character and claims, to which we received the most ample attestation, Mr. Hunter was selected as our first missionary. How carefully he prepared himself for his destined sphere, more than one Report to the General Assembly has given the proof.

To his honor be it said that, though distinguished as a student in his preliminary course, he did not count any acquirements too great for the calling of the missionary, or any talents too pre-eminent in the discharge of its functions. Having his whole soul filled with a sense of its importance, he sought to prepare himself for it by the acquisition of all knowledge which might either contribute to furnish his mind or to further his work, and long before he sailed, had availed himself of the opportunity of mastering at home those Eastern dialects which are generally left to be mastered abroad. At length the term of his probation was complete, and on the 19th day of July, 1855, Mr. Hunter was ordained in St. Andrew's Church, Edinburgh, to the office of the holy ministry, and thereafter was set apart as our first missionary to the Punjab. On that same day he was united in marriage with one of a kindred spirit, gentle and amiable, and devoted—a helpmate, indeed, never to be separated from him in life, as in death they were not divided. Never, we believe, did any missionary leave us followed more earnestly and hopefully with the prayers and blessings of the Church. Simple and unaffected in his piety, he had secured the affection of all who knew him; and ardent and devoted in his zeal, tempered by prudence, he gave the assurance that there would be nothing wanting on his part, under the blessing of God, to commend himself to universal approval. Accordingly we know that at Bombay, where he tarried for a season, brief as his stay was, it was not without its fruit. Long will his name be cherished there by all who knew him, while it cannot fail to be embalmed in the memory of those who, by his instrumentality, were either converted to Christianity, or by his ministry were built up in the faith. At Sealcote, also in the Punjab, the place of his destination, we cannot suppose that, short as his career has been, it has left behind him no memorial of one who was ready to spend and be spent in his Master's service. It may be that even now some poor idolater is weeping over his bloody grave, or that, in days more remote, when the hurricane has spent its force, and that fearful tragedy has been played out to the last, the Sikh may point in mournful gratitude to the spot where the murdered missionary sleeps, who spoke to him of God and Christ, of heaven and hell—ay, and sleeps not alone, for close by his side there are others sleeping—his murdered wife and his murdered child—not to rise again till the heavens are no more, and the elements melt with fervent heat. Oh how mysterious, brethren, are the visitations of Providence—how sudden and irregular are the visitations of death! And yet we must not murmur, we must not repine. We must not question Jehovah's will, we must not arraign Jehovah's ways. That was a dark day, and mysterious too, in the history of the Church, when Stephen, surrounded by the murderers of his Lord, was himself overtaken by a bloody death.

And yet the Gospel tells us, "he fell asleep." How soothing is the expression, bringing before us, in its peaceful imagery, the idea of the laboring man, after a day of toil, sinking to rest, and imparting all the repose of the evening scene, even to the rough and painful bed of Stephen! That day had to him been a day of agony—his body had been roughly handled, his frame had been shaken by convulsion; but now the struggle is over, and the sleep of the martyr is the sleep of peace. "Cease then," might we not say, "ye unbelieving Jews, to trouble around his riven tenement. The tempest of your persecution has swept over him, and his shattered bark has now reached the sheltered lake. Your land has been stained with his blood, but his spirit has sought its home in the skies." And what thought, on another soil the cry has been heard of domestic fury, not to be appeased but by a deluge of blood? Blessed be God, it cannot last. It may mar man's features, anticipate corruption and the worm, but it cannot touch God's image; it may rend asunder the body, but it cannot tear the immortal spirit from the hand of God. When the worst is done, the rage of the heathen has only dispatched by a rough road the soul of the believer to the blessed mansions of his Father's house. It cannot touch them there. Their warfare is over, their work is done. The soldier has put off the helmet and put on the crown. The servant of God who proclaimed His name, has been called away to behold His glory. The child that was torn from its mother's breast, is with her now in a better land, and clothed in white; the robes they wear shall be never soiled and never rent. All, all who believed in Jesus are in heaven now, the high place of their refuge, and the rock of their strength; and, standing in its safe retreat, where the foot of the Assyrian cannot creep, there is no presumption in the thought that they are awaiting around the throne the arrival of those to whom, though not permitted to say "farewell" upon earth, they would have with them in heaven, to partake of their blessedness, and share in their joy. "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night, in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."