

than many other European nations. Whilst the emperor of Russia was sending £10,000 for the relief of the Greeks at Constantinople, and the king of France sent his agents to ransom them from captivity in Egypt—we were literally doing nothing. The greater portion of the money which he had received, when at Constantinople, came from the Society of Friends. (Applause.)

The Marquis of Cholmondeley returned thanks, and the meeting separated.—Collection, 65*l.* 1*l.*

### CHRISTIANITY IN THE EAST.

*Extracts from the Speech of J. S. Buckingham. Eq. delivered at the eleventh Anniversary of the Whitby Auxiliary Bible Society, on Friday, Sept. 18, 1829.*

The first of the Eastern countries which it was my lot to visit, as a traveller, was Egypt; and it was, of course, impossible for me to tread the banks of the Nile, from among the bulrushes of which *Mosca* was taken up by the daughter of Pharaoh—to traverse the land of Goshen, or cross the Red Sea to the Desert of Wan Fering—to behold the stupendous monuments, in the erection of which, it is at least probable, the enslaved and captive Israelites were employed—and not feel an additional interest in every thing connected with its Scriptural history; or to be indifferent to the state and condition of the people, among whom those Scriptures were still held in esteem. The Government of that country, as you are aware, is in the hands of the Mahomedans, by whom Christianity is rejected, and its professors subjected to disabilities and oppressions.—Accordingly the circulation of the Scriptures is extremely limited in Egypt. Nevertheless, inasmuch as there is still a number of professing Christians, of the several sects denominated as Greeks, Armenians, Copts, Nestorians, Maronites, &c. having religious establishments and places of worship in Egypt, the introduction of the Scriptures among them might not be a work of difficulty, and from them the more readily pass into the hands of those who would be otherwise inaccessible; while, in consequence of the degraded and corrupt state of the Christians themselves, it may be said that the Scriptures, if presented in a language in which they could be familiarly read, would be likely to effect as great a change among them as among those who profess not their faith: for scarcely any thing can be conceived more remote from the simple purity of Christianity than the rites, ceremonies, and dogmas, designated by that name in the East.

The countries that I next visited, and which may well be associated together on this occasion as one, namely, Palestine and Mesopotamia, possessed a still stronger Scriptural interest than even Egypt: for, while gazing on the walls and towers of Jerusalem,—crossing the brook Kedron by the pool of Siloam,—treading the mount of Olives, and entering Bethany and Bethphage, Bethlehem and Nazareth,—who could be indifferent to the Sacred Volume that recorded all the events of which these spots were the scenes and witnesses?—If I bathed myself in the waters of the Jordan, or lingered on the shores of the Dead Sea,—if I hung with delight on the glorious prospects from Lebanon, or reposed among the bowers of Damascus,—in short, whatever path my footsteps traced, whether it led me through the ruins of Tyre and Sidon, or the fields and vallies of remote solitudes, every rock, and every eminence,—every brook and every rivulet had its own special history, and roused up a thousand Scriptural associations. Yet here, too, as in Egypt, the government is in the hands of Mahomedans; and though there are not wanting professing Christians in considerable number and variety, both as residents and as pilgrims; yet the Scriptures are so little known and understood among them, and so little vigilance is exercised by those whose duty it is to be always active in the cause, that they correspond exactly with the description given by the prophet, when he speaks of the “shepherds that sleep” while the fold is in danger, and the watchmen who slumber” while the citadel is invaded.

In Mesopotamia, the darkness is even greater still. At Ur, of the Chaldees, the birth place of Abraham, and over all the country beyond the great river Euphrates, Christianity is less and less to be found, even in name, and still more remote from its original purity in character; so much so, that there is one sect, who consider themselves to be in

some degree Christians, as they profess to follow a gospel of St. John: but their claim to that appellation may be judged from the fact of their actually paying divine honours to Satan, and quoting a passage of their Gospel in their defence. The awful ruins of Nineveh and Babylon stand upon the banks of their respective streams, the Tigris and Euphrates, in all the silent gloom of utter desolation; and traversing their vast remains with the Scriptural descriptions of their grandeur fresh in my recollection, it was impossible not to feel all the sadness which characterised the captive Israelites of old, when, instead of singing the songs of Zion, as in happier days, they hung their harps upon the willows, and sat themselves down by the waters of Babylon and wept.

In passing from thence into Persia, there was not much improvement, although there a ray of hope had begun to illumine the general darkness. In every part of that country, the European character is so highly respected, that almost any measure coming from Europeans, and Englishmen especially, would be sure to meet with less resistance than in any other part of the Mahomedan world. While Persia is, therefore, quite as destitute as all the other countries of Asia, in a moral and religious sense, it appears to me that it offers a less obstructed channel for the introduction of a great change in this particular respect, than in any other of the surrounding States. I may add to this general assertion, a fact which came under my own personal observation, and which tends to show what might be done in Persia by judicious men and judicious measures. The Rev. Henry Martyn, whose name must be familiar to most of you, and whose character stands high wherever his name is known, was in Persia just previous to the period of my passing through that country: and at Shiraz I met with several mollahs or teachers of the Mahomedan faith, from whom I learnt that Mr. Martyn's life and conversation had produced the most surprising effect, in softening the usual hostility between Mahomedans and Christians; that the most learned Mufstis had conversed freely with him, on points of faith and doctrine, and that they had come to the conclusion, that there were not such insuperable barriers between them, as they had at first conceived. Such a step as this is most important—because from the moment those who are in error can be brought to listen patiently to the truth, hopes may be entertained of its final triumph; for, as Milton has beautifully observed, “though all the winds of doctrine were let loose upon the earth, so truth be among them, we need not fear. Let her and falsehood grapple: who ever knew her to be put to the worst in a free and open encounter?”

From Persia I proceeded to India, and there I remained as a resident for several years. It might be expected that in a country so long under our dominion as that had been, the same backwardness with respect to the spread of truth and sound religion would not have been observed; but I regret to say, that while in India the reign of superstition is more widely spread, and more terrible in its degrading effects, than in any of the countries I have yet mentioned, the obstacles thrown in the way of those who are impatient to substitute a better order of things, are quite as great as in either of them. Let me mention only one or two of the revolting practices which their superstition engendered, and still upholds; and you will then see what a vast field a hundred millions of beings so immersed in darkness must afford for British benevolence, and Christian reformation.

The most popularly known of these Indian rites is that of the burning of the Hindoo widows on the funeral piles of their husbands: to such a frightful extent is this carried, that, in the course of ten years, according to a Parliamentary Report made on this subject, nearly seven thousand Indian widows were burnt alive! Even if the practice were undoubtedly enjoined by their sacred books, and were always performed voluntarily, there is something in it so revolting to humanity that it ought not to be permitted; but it rests upon very doubtful authority, even in their own writings, one of the most learned of the Brahmins having written several works to show that the practice is at least optional, and of comparatively recent date: and in by far the greater number of cases, it is not voluntary, the parties being dragged with opiate, deluded by priests, and terrified by threats, into compliance. In addition to

this, they are frequently bound down with cords and ligatures to the funeral pile, so that their escape would be impossible, however much they might desire it; and in those few instances in which the parties have been left unbound, and have leaped off the pile as soon as the flames began to envelope their slender frames, they have been most wretchedly seized by the frantic bystanders, and flung back again into the flames, with their scorched and mangled limbs dropping from off their bodies, thus expiring amidst the most horrid and protracted tortures that the human imagination can conceive. And all this, under the sanction, by the authority, and with the countenance and protection, of a Government calling itself Christian, that of the East India Company.

What appears to me to add greatly to the horror of this diabolical sacrifice, is the consideration that it puts out of existence those who are the most worthy to live:—as, whatever there may be of voluntary submission to this rite on the part of those who are its victims, must spring from one of these motives:—either, first, the devotional motive, or a willingness to offer up life and all that can endear it, rather than forfeit the hope of future happiness, or incur the displeasure of the Supreme Being—which though their faith be grounded in error, they may most sincerely believe, and act upon in the way they think most conducive to that end:—or, secondly, the domestic motive, an extreme attachment to the object of their affections, and an unwillingness to survive him who was not merely their husband and protector, but their best and only friend:—or Thirdly, the social motive—or an abhorrence of living in a society without the full participation in its honours and enjoyments, and an unwillingness to have their lives prolonged, if they could only live as outcasts, repudiated by their relatives and families, and despised by strangers as well as friends. These appear to me to be the only conceivable motives of such a submission to suffering on the part of the unfortunate, but still amiable and interesting widows of the East. And yet, surely, these are motives which prove what excellent materials must exist in a society capable of producing such instances of self devotion, for the construction of a better and happier community. For who is there among us, that does not honour, with the highest distinction, the female penitent and devotee, who, rather than do that which should forfeit her hope of heaven, would sacrifice her life and all she held at her disposal? Who is there among us, that does not equally honour with our sympathy and our admiration, the young and affectionate widow, whose sorrow at the death of her husband and lord, so surpasses all ordinary bounds, as to evince itself in paroxysms of grief that drive the unhappy victims sometimes on the verge of insanity, and leave her in such a state as will permit her to see nothing but perpetual gloom in the prospect of the future, so that if the sublime faith of Christianity had not taught her self-destruction was a crime against the awful majesty of the Creator, she would be as much disposed as the Indian widow, to sink at once into the grave that seems about to close upon the remains of all that the earth held dear in her estimation? Who, I may also ask, can there be among us, who does not equally honour the female, be she virgin, wife or widow, whose strongest feeling next to devotion, is her love of an unsullied reputation, who could not bear the thought of sustaining existence otherwise than honourably, and who would rather die a thousand deaths, than live to have the finger of scorn pointed at her as one who had outlived her untainted name? And shall all these be deemed virtues in Britain, and vices in Hindoostan? It is impossible. The motive is in both cases equally honourable: and the misdirection of that motive in the case of the Indian widows, appears to me only to strengthen their claims on our sympathy and commiseration—as, where so good a soil exists, the seed cannot be sown in vain.

The other abominable rite of which I shall now speak, (for I confine myself to the two prominent ones, although there are a hundred that might be detailed,) is the Pilgrimage to Juggernaut. This is the name of the idol which is worshipped at a place called Pooree, on the sea-coast of Orissa, between Madras and Bengal, and to whose shrine pilgrimages are made from different parts of India. The lives annually sacrificed to this monstrous idol surpass all credibility; but it may be sufficient to say that the approach to the temple is indicated, for