

THE GOSPEL IN THE PUNJAB.

(Concluded from Nov. No.)

The Hindu and Mohammedan worlds in India were not prepared before hand and the preparation to receive the Gospel is only now going on. This is emphatically the preparation, the ploughing, the upturning stage: and there are on every hand abundant proofs that the chariot-wheels of progress are not tarrying. Influence social, educational, political, and religious, are all moulding a new and perhaps not distant future; but what shape or shapes that future, in its various stages, may take it is hard to say,—perhaps not what we could wish. Meanwhile the seed is being, I believe on the whole, faithfully sown by missionaries; and the few gleanings reaped by them may be far from representing the real amount of true grain produced. The difficulties of an open confession of Christ are enormous. At present few can rise to the height of Christian heroism necessary for an open following of Christ. Most Presbyterian missions, at least of the Punjab, are perhaps now receiving fewer into their fold than at an earlier stage of their work. Then they have to provide Christian agents, and they were perhaps a little too eager to baptize all that offered, and appoint them, on high salaries, to teach and preach the Gospel; and the results have not always been specially helpful. By-and-by the stage was reached when the converts began to be troublesome. If every convert was to be a permanent charge to the Mission, say of only £12 a year, it is evident our Missions had a limit to the number of converts they could receive, and that, if the

number of our children were to be thus greatly increased, it only could be at pauper churches in which all sense of manly independence and Christian dependence on God would be gradually eliminated. At least the Presbyterian Missions of the Punjab have now generally made a stand against raising up pauper communities. Personally I could have baptized many could I have held out to them any hope of Mission service or temporal help. The Punjab Missions are falling away from appointing any one a teacher or preacher, and the cry of the Missions is for more *fit* men. Such inquirers as give every prospect of becoming truly worthy labourers as needed teachers and preachers in the vineyard we gladly baptize and provide for with this view. But these are few. To the majority of inquirers we can only point out their duty, and bid them "trust in God and do the right." It is but few that can get Government employment and in too many cases baptism, I am ashamed to say, it is a disqualification even for that, while it shuts every door for an honest livelihood alike among Hindus and Mohammedans. Among hill people—such as in Chumba and Derajeeling, among the aboriginal tribes generally, and among the great and promising Dravidian race of the Presidency of Madras—this is comparatively a light difficulty; but in India generally, and perhaps in Punjab particularly, it constitutes meantime the hardest practical problem we have to solve. Will the Church bear this in mind, and either help us out of our difficulty or have patience with

WILLIAM HARPER.

SEALKOTE, PUNJAB, 3d July 1880.