

## Foreign Ecclesiastical Intelligence.

## BRITISH GUIANA—ITS RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGES.

*The Grove, Georgetown, September 30, 1861.*

SIR,—Many persons who have given the subject consideration, are impressed with the idea (and they have some solid grounds for arriving at the conclusion) that England has been specially selected by Providence as the instrument to convey to the most remote and least frequented portions of the habitable globe the blessings of civilisation, and the simple yet sublime truths of Christianity; and well and nobly is she accomplishing her glorious mission, for wherever her flag becomes unfurled, there contemporaneously are scattered the seeds of good government, and a pure faith; seeds which, in the course of time, yield a gratifying and most abundant harvest.

To no country in the world, perhaps, will this remark more aptly apply than to our possessions on the coast of South America, known as British Guiana, comprising the colonies of Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice. These colonies, as you are aware, after belonging to us for a short time, about 1796, were restored to the Dutch at the peace of Amiens in 1802; but in consequence of a renewal of the war in 1803, they were again captured, and from that time to the present have uninterruptedly been annexed to the British Crown.

In those days of compulsory labour, religion and education were not considered to be necessary or essential to the well-being of the slaves by those who owned them, and the consequence was that they—the slaves—were quite as ignorant and nearly as savage as if they had never left the wilds of Africa; the probability, indeed, is that many of them were more savage and wicked, as the cruelties practised upon them in their thralldom were certain to excite and stir up in their breasts feelings of hatred and revenge, with many other bad passions from which they were exempt when in their native forests.

Some solitary proprietor, here and there, differing from his neighbours, did conceive that his negroes had souls within them that would never die, and directly or indirectly used his efforts to promote and secure their happiness hereafter; but such a man was an exception: he was regarded as a visionary, a disturber of the proper system of coercion, a meddler in things that did not concern him.

It was, therefore, a matter of no great surprise when the country became ours, to find only a solitary church of the Lutheran form of worship in each province. Under British rule, matters began to improve, slowly at first, I admit, but there was an improvement; a clergyman of the Church of England was soon settled in Georgetown, and another in New Amsterdam; the London Missionary Society, too, sent out its ministers and teachers, and the negroes heard, for the first time, occasionally on Sunday, of a home in heaven, where there are no chains nor whips, nor separations nor deaths; where there rules and governs one common Father of us all, with whom the colour of a man's skin weighs as nothing; that whites and blacks are equally His children, and the objects of His care; that it is His divine will that some men should be masters and others servants, and that the more we are afflicted here—if we bear our sufferings patiently—the greater will be our reward and happiness hereafter. With cheering intelligence like this poured into their anxious ears, the slaves, when practicable, began to attend the churches and chapels in large numbers, and the Sunday-schools became thronged.

Religion, like a young and vigorous tree planted in good soil, grew and advanced rapidly. The Church of England appointed more clergymen; the colonies became, in 1826, united to the diocese of Barbadoes, and the Bishop, Dr. Co'wbridge, commenced paying his triennial visitations. The Church of Scotland, the Wesleyans, and other Missionaries, too, had their ministers and schoolmasters sent out; new churches and chapels were erected, former ones enlarged, the colonial legislature at every annual session voted considerable sums of money for religious purposes, and in all quarters of the country there was certainly made to appear "the form of godliness."

A little later, again, the good work still progressing, the colonies were divided by law into parishes; some were declared to be Episcopalian; some Scotch Presbyterian, according to the preponderating influence and number of the inhabitants belonging to these persuasions resident in the localities.

Later still, in 1842, the Bishop of Barbadoes having relinquished his see, British Guiana was itself erected into a diocese, and an earnest, good man, connected with the country by ties of property and relationship, appointed prelate. Under him, and mainly through his exertion, there were established two valuable institutions, now in full usefulness, "Queen's College" and "Bishop's College," while under him religion and education in many parishes became infused with more vigour and vitality.

Nor were other sections of the Christian Church less active; the Roman Catholics became a numerous and respectable body since the natives of Madeira began to arrive as permanent residents, had their Bishop nominated; more dissenting ministers and preachers also came, prompted, as I sincerely believe, (and I had, officially and otherwise, many opportunities of judging,) by worthy motives—to further the service of a Supreme Master, and the advancement of religion and knowledge among his benighted creatures in this isolated portion of the world.

It may be interesting to particularise the churches and chapels scattered throughout the whole length and breadth of the land.

Of the Church of England there are in Demerara, a cathedral, seven churches, and five chapels. Essequibo, three churches and five chapels. Berbice, four churches and four chapels.

There are also three missions established specially for the benefit of the aboriginal Indians, one at Bartika, on the Essequibo river; one at Peeraboom, on the Berbice river; and one at an Indian place of resort, on the Abari river, "but what are these among so many?"

Of the Church of Scotland there are in Demerara, three churches and two chapels. Essequibo, one church. Berbice, five churches.

Of the Church of Rome, in Demerara, a cathedral and two chapels. Essequibo, two chapels. Berbice, a church.

All these places of worship are supported, and their ministers maintained, by liberal grants of money from out of the Colonial treasury, in some instances assisted by certain annual allowances from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and other institutions of a similar nature in England.

The dissenting places of worship are as follows:—

*London Missionaries.*—In Demerara, seven chapels. Essequibo, one chapel. Berbice, seven chapels.

*Wesleyans.*—In Demerara, three chapels. Essequibo, two chapels. Berbice two chapels.

*Independent Congregational Dissenters.*—In Demerara, eight chapels. Essequibo, seven chapels.—Total, thirty-six.

These are conducted upon the voluntary principle,—a state allowance being contrary to the views of dissenters,—and their ministers and teachers maintained at the expense of their respective congregations, very little assistance being required from home for their support,—a fact which speaks volumes for the sincerity of the religion of the blacks, the principal attendants.

It will be thus seen that there are over eighty places of worship now, where there were formerly only two or three.

The schools are more numerous still, there being thirty-five belonging to the Church of England, fourteen to the Church of Scotland, seventeen to Wesleyans, and three to the Church of Rome, all of which receive support from the Colonial treasury. There are also from thirty to forty belonging to the London Missionary Society, the teachers in which are paid by the parents of children, aided by donations from friends and well-wishers.

The schools receiving Government support are under the supervision of an inspector, an officer appointed by the Crown but paid by the colony, who not only examines the children periodically, but also the masters and mistresses previously to their appointment to their respective posts.

The schools attached to the chapels of the London Missionaries are under the control of the ministers, and are well-conducted establishments, doing, in their respective spheres, a great deal of good. They are numerously attended, and in them the children acquire considerable proficiency in all the solid branches of general and useful knowledge. I am enabled to speak positively, on this point, as I had the pleasure of presiding, by invitation, for years at the usual Christmas examinations held in the county where I exercised jurisdiction.

The inhabitants of the colony number perhaps 150,000—a mixed community, consisting of Europeans, Portuguese, East Indians or Coolies, and Blacks, the last largely predominating. All these you perceive to be fully provided with religious and educational training. Would that the aboriginal Indians of the interior could have like blessings conferred upon them; would that they, too, could be taught to partake, in brotherly love and fellowship, of these advantages, and thus eventually share in those pure waters of life, whose fountain, we are assured, shall never become exhausted—I am, &c.

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—Colonial Church Chronicle.*

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES IN CHINA.

*(From the Spirit of Missions of the Church in America.)*

To appreciate the present state of things in China, it must be borne in mind that there are three parties with whom the missionaries have to deal—the people, the imperial rulers, and the Nankin insurgent.

It is with the first of these, the people of the land, that the Missionary has most to do, and from them he experiences least opposition. Confining ourselves to the history of our own mission, it is perfectly accurate to say, that never has there been a time when free enough access has not been enjoyed by the missionary to more people than his strength would allow him to deal with; and what more could be asked?

This, which has always been true of our missionary efforts, is most painfully realised now, when the masses of accessible population spread out before us beyond the limit of vision, and their number surpasses all ordinary habits of computa-