

FIRST PROTESTANT MISSIONARY IN CHINA.

"Christian Missions," by T. W. M. Marshall.

(Continued)

But his intercourse with Catholics was not always limited to the purchase or acceptance of their books. Sometimes he even visited their churches, where he saw multitudes of Christians—a "vast number" is his own expression—worshipping God, not "with locked doors," nor "in fear and trembling," but as openly as they might have done in London or Paris. "I went," he says, "on Friday evening to the Roman Catholic cathedral," where he found the people commemorating the Passion of Our Lord. There was, he tells us, in the church "a representation of Jesus," and "the preacher called upon the people to look at the part into which the spear was thrust, and held out his finger to point to it. In a corner was a figure as large as life, laid in a tomb, and exhibited as the body of Jesus. The people went forward, one after another, and kissed the feet of the figure." (Memoirs, vol. I., p. 361.) And then Mr. Morrison went home, meditating perhaps upon this instructive scene, and comprehending how the Chinese Christians had grown familiar with the Passion of their Redeemer, and whence they had derived courage to confess Him openly before men, and even, when the occasion arose, to lay down their lives for Him.

Mr. Morrison, however, continued, as Mr. Ellis says, "to err on the safe side." But he remembered that he had been sent to China as "a missionary" and that he must at least do something to keep up the character; and so, in the florid language of Mr. Ellis, "this devoted missionary tried the practicability of printing part of the Scriptures." The Catholics had anticipated him in this good work by four hundred years, as Neander has told us in speaking of John de Monte Corvino; and the candid Mr. Medhurst was aware, as he confesses, that a second time, at a later date, "the Catholics had translated the major part of the New Testament into Chinese." Mr. Morrison was also conscious of this fact, and endeavored to turn it to good account. "The Acts of the Apostles," we learn from his biographer, "the translation of which had been the work of some Roman Catholic missionary, was his first undertaking." (Brief Notice, etc., p. 61.) He might well confess his obligations "to the Catholics," who, as Abel Remusat says, "composed in Chinese in a style equal to the best authors of that country." But Mr. Morrison, even with the aid of such masters, could only spoil their work. His version of the Scriptures has long since been abandoned as useless; his Grammar, Protestants tell us, "is rather a record of the imperfection than of the completeness of his own progress." (Monthly Review, vol. lxxix., p. 469.) While his Dictionary, though copied from that of Father Premare, is "full of faults" according to Klaproth, (Note to Timkowski's Travels, vol. i, ch. ix. p. 350.) and "very defective" according to Mr. Taylor Meadows. (Desultory Notes on the Government and People of China, p. 24.)

But it was nothing to write books, imperfect as they were, and costing enormous sums, unless he could get them into circulation. There was, however, some danger of irritating the Chinese, and Mr. Morrison, we have seen, was accustomed to precautions. "As to circulating the books which I have printed," he says, with perfect candor, "there is nothing done in this respect but with the utmost secrecy and caution, and in a way that could not easily be traced to me." Yet an ardent Protestant assures us, that "the Jesuits," meaning the Catholic missionaries, "have never found any difficulty in circulating the books which they have printed in Chinese; but, on the contrary, they have been obliged after circulating a large impression, to print a second edition." (Memoir on Sending the Scriptures to China, by William Mosley, p. 22.) Men who exposed their lives every hour of the day were not likely to indulge excessive caution about their books; and in noticing the contrast, we may perhaps accept the explanation of an English Protestant, whose sympathies were all in his favor, that "Dr. Morrison's labors were not of a dazzling and heroic order." (The Cross and the Dragon, by John Kesson, ch. xv., p. 211.)

Thus far this "first herald" of Protestantism in China hardly attracts our sympathy; nor can we agree with his amiable biographer, that "angelic eyes," which love to look on brave and saintly deeds, were likely to derive much satisfaction from the contemplation of his

cautious proceedings. But it is time to enquire, before we pass to others, what success he had in inducing the refractory "millions of the East" to enter "the gates of life." He will tell us himself.

"On the Lord's day I have preached to the Chinese in my own house, but I have not to rejoice over them as converted to God." (Memoirs, vol. i. p. 298.) Yet in the next sentence he tells us of four Catholic missionaries just banished from Peking, because they had been too successful in the same attempt. Again, while he is himself carefully shut up in his house, "with locked doors," he frankly admits, though apparently without deriving any instruction from the contrast, that "the Christians here"—i. e. the Catholics—"are discovered by their refusing to subscribe to the public idolatrous rites of the heathen." Speaking of an outburst of persecution in the province of Su-tchuen, he says of the Catholics: "The two leaders, who would not recant, are ordered to be strangled immediately. Thirty-eight, who also refused to recant, are ordered to be sent to Tartary, to be given as slaves to the Eleuths" (Ibid., vol. ii. p. 35.) A little later, in 1820, he notices that "four poor men, barbers, at Peking, were seized, and would not renounce the European religion. So that they were everywhere the same, whether at Canton, Peking, or in the interior provinces of the empire; even these poor Chinese neophytes—barbers, shopkeepers, and women—being more courageous soldiers of the Cross than this educated and opulent representative of English Protestantism.

Again and again he refers to similar examples, but only to adhere more closely to his own manner of life. "A French missionary," he says, "after repeated orders were sent to him, was obliged to leave; whilst I remained unmolested." Why should they molest him? What was a servant in the English factory to them? "There have been edicts," he adds triumphantly, "against the Roman Catholic missionaries, threatening them with severe penalties; but my name and pursuits are, I believe, wholly unknown to the Chinese government." (Memoirs, vol. i., p. 209.) No doubt they were, although he had now been there about six years. If St. Paul had practised as many precautions as Mr. Morrison, he would have known neither bonds nor imprisonment, neither scourging nor death,—but the heathen would have remained unconverted.

The entry in his journal of March 15th, 1813, is as follows: "Present at worship only A-Fo, Low-Heen, A-Pan, and A-Yun. At the beginning of worship they were irreverent and laughed," which seems to have surprised him; yet surely the spectacle of a married gentleman, in an easy attitude, reading something out of a book, was not awe-inspiring, and might well appear to this mirthful congregation far below even their own idea of "worship." On the 18th of April, "six were present;" and on the 9th of May he is able to say, "I was mistaken in saying that I never had more than nine; there were this morning," including the ladies of his party and the servants, "ten persons at worship." But on the 23rd of the same month comes the sorrowful admission, "I am concerned that none seem to feel the power of truth;" and again a few Sundays later,—for their religion only manifested itself on Sunday,—"I am concerned that my ministrations are apparently in vain." In the following year, 1814, "on February 28th, Lord's day, I addressed five persons, from the 12th chapter of Hebrews. I was myself deeply interested in the subject." Unfortunately the interest began and ended with himself. And twelve months later he is still "conducting worship with Mrs. Morrison and Mrs. Milne;" the "millions of the East" being completely deaf to the feeble accents of so cautious a herald. Three years after, Mr. Medhurst still reports, that "his labors were confined to the narrow sphere of his own household."

In 1820, the same sterility is once more attested by the various colleague who had now joined him, and Morrison writes to the society at home, "All the missionaries complain to me of being dispirited. (Memoirs, vol. ii., p. 26.) Yet Mr. Medhurst, speaking of this very year, says, "A French missionary was strangled in the province of Hoo-pih, by order of the government; and L'Amiot, who has been twenty-seven years in Peking, was banished to Macao." Mr. Medhurst adds, "they have now Catholic communities in all the provinces, and in many there are chapels, where service is performed by native priests." And then he notices, with not unnatural admiration, that the Lazarist Fathers had even established an ecclesiastical seminary "in Tartary, beyond the wall of China." (China; its State and Prospects, ch. ix., p. 243.)

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In 1821, for lapse of time brings no change, "Dr. Morrison was much concerned at the small effect produced by his labors." In 1822, he still writes, "there are few natives on whose conscience Divine truth has made an impression." In 1832, after ten years more of enormous expenditure, "only ten persons have been baptized;" every one of whom was immediately, in spite of what Morrison himself calls their "obscure views," provided for by "the mission," and employed in printing, but apparently without securing their fidelity; for some years after, the Rev. Howard Malcolm, who was sent to visit and report upon all the Protestant missions in the East, candidly informed his employers: "there is no Chinese convert at Canton, nor religious services in that language, nor giving of tracts." (Travels in South Eastern Asia, p. 189.) And this is confirmed by Dr. Wells Williams, an American missionary, who confesses, in 1839, that "the prospect at his death was nearly as dark as when he landed;" (The Middle Kingdom, vol. ii. ch. xix, p. 327.) while even of the "baptized" printers, Morrison himself records, that they were of such doubtful morality, that they were commonly addicted to theft, and on one occasion, "stole several cases of type." (Memoirs, vol. ii., p. 67.)

We may now pass to other witnesses. The first "herald" of Protestantism in China has confessed his failure. Whatever he put his hand to came to naught. He established a newspaper, and it died with the first number. He founded a school, and out of a total of twenty-nine pupils, nine were dismissed for "bad conduct" or "stupidity," three ran away, and eight were removed by their parents. (Chinese Repository, vol. xii., p. 623.) He published books which have long been abandoned as worthless; and after expending either upon himself or his literary failures, about one hundred thousand pounds, contributed chiefly by the people of these islands, did no more towards the conversion of China than if he had never quitted the shores of England. In 1834, the year of his death, his journal contains this passage; "It is thirty years since I was accepted as a missionary in Mr. Hardcastle's countinghouse." Who Mr. Hardcastle was, and how he

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came to accumulate in his own person the functions of a merchant and a pontiff, is not explained; but as almost the last entry still deplors his "small success," this he appears to have thought he ought to account for. He does it in this manner: "I think it is utterly impracticable to any but a Roman Catholic missionary, who has persons in the interior already attached to his cause," to venture into the country. Yet his colleague, Mr. Medhurst, answers this unworthy plea by the honest rejoinder, that "the Catholic missionaries had once no knowledge of or adherents in China, but went forth in the first instance unprotected," and Morrison repeatedly acknowledges that the heathen being now on the watch for them, they run the same risks, perhaps greater, at the present day than in earlier times. "Three European Roman Catholic missionaries," he says in one place, "entered China about a year ago; there was a great risk of losing their lives if discovered by the government." And again: "there is a native Roman Catholic at the seminary in Macao, who is preparing for a mission to Corea. Many have lost their lives there, but this person is willing to sacrifice himself. He offers himself up to God." (Memoirs, vol. i., p. 403.) He only stops short of the confession which a more candid coreligionist makes for him, when he says: "The risks the Catholic missionary would run, and the dangers he would hazard, are greater than those which the Protestant missionary feels himself called upon to encounter." (The Cross and the Dragon, ch. xiv., p. 189.) In other words, the latter is willing to write and preach, but not willing to suffer or die. And this invariable and admitted contrast between the two classes is thus explained, with partial accuracy, by an American Protestant bishop, who had noted

the same unwelcome fact in other lands: "Why is it that we contemplate such an enterprise with terror? Is it not because we have lost the true original idea of the ministerial commission?" (Narrative of a Tour in Turkey and Persia, by Rev. Horatio Southgate, vol. i., ch. xvii., p. 293.)

In 1834, Dr. Morrison reached the climax of his fortunes, and was made vice-consul, with a salary of one thousand three hundred pounds a year, "rather an anomalous place for a missionary," as he himself observes, though he cheerfully acquiesced in the anomaly, and would have profited by it without scruple; but in this year he died and left his place to others, to run the same career, record the same confessions, and repeat the same failures.

A youngster was asked to give his idea of the meaning of "responsibility," so he said: "Well, supposing I had only two buttons on my knickers, and one came off, all the responsibility would rest on the other button."

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