

INDIA.

LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

SALEM.—Extract from a letter of the Rev. G. Walton, dated in Sept. 1838.

The apathy and listlessness for which the Hindus have been hitherto proverbial, is fast passing away. The progress of the Gospel, the march of intellect, and the spread of knowledge and truth among the votaries of Paganism, have created no small alarm. Angry passions, disputes, and machinations, before unknown, now begin to appear. It is my opinion that, sooner or later, a most violent and cruel persecution will take place in India. Happy would those of your missionaries and the native christians be on whom the crown of martyrdom should fall. May we who are in the field, and those who shall succeed us, be faithful unto death, not fear nor be dismayed, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength, and He will go forth conquering unto conquer, till He shall have made all his enemies his footstool.

Religious excitement at a Native Festival.

The Hindus annually celebrate a festival called the Dhurmarajah Festival, in honour of the goddess Darobathee, who, to prove her innocence of a crime laid to her charge, had to pass through the fire, and came uninjured from it. Several engage to pass through the fire, and this they perform very expeditiously. When the ceremony was last about to take place, a respectable and intelligent native, who has read many of our books and possesses a considerable knowledge of divine things, took upon himself, in the presence of the assembled multitude, to speak and to endeavour, as far as the force of argument would go, to persuade his fellow-countrymen to desist from this cruel ceremony. As soon as his intention was known, those who were personally interested became enraged, and threatened that if he did not go away, they would make him feel the weight of their anger; he did not appear to be intimidated, but dauntlessly told them to bring out the image of the goddess on whose account, and to obtain whose favour and special protection, they were about to pass through the fire, "which, for my part," said he "I consider to be not only a very foolish and unnecessary performance, but cruelty is also combined with it. Let the goddess be put into the fire first; and if she is not burnt, I promise readily to go into the fire with you." Instead of acceding to this fair proposal, they began to cry out, "Punish him, let him be punished for his daring presumption. He has been taught by the Padre and his people to speak against our gods and the worship we pay to them. He is become a Christian." The

confusion and disturbance which took place increased to such a degree, that it was feared some distressing scene would occur; but the man who had occasioned this uproar was obliged to make his escape.

The above-mentioned affair happened on a Sunday. It has produced no small stir among the people, and has excited a good deal of angry feeling in the minds of those who are interested, and who derive a good deal of emolument, honor, and praise from the observance of this cruel ceremony of passing through the fire. Many consultations were held, as to the best method of putting a stop to the progress of the Gospel, which, in their estimation, appeared to be an alarming and growing evil, and if not put down soon, that it would spread to such a degree, that nothing would be able to withstand or arrest the influence of Christianity among the people. This, I think, at present may well be compared to the little cloud which the servant of Elijah saw rising out of the sea like a man's hand, the forerunner of the desired and expected blessing in that day when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Wicked attempt to destroy the Mission.

A few weeks after the above affair took place, a most wicked plot was laid by some of the enemies of the mission, which, if it had proved successful, would have produced serious and fatal consequences not only to myself, but to my people. The design was to excite the inhabitants to rise up in a mass against us. Some wicked men came one night and removed the god Veniagen from its pedestal in the temple; brought and placed it in front of our Mission Tamul School in Sheva Petta; took off the idol's head, threw it aside, covered it with filth and went away. Early the next morning, when those who had to pass that way, saw the horrible condition in which their God was placed, they went and informed the rest. In a very short time, almost the whole of the people residing in Sheva Petta were assembled on the spot, filled with indignation and rage against the perpetrators of this most atrocious and wicked act. Many cried out, That no one else but the Padre and his people could have dared to commit such a wicked deed. Others said, "What is the use of our living any longer in the world, if Christians are permitted to ill treat our gods in this most shameful manner."

When the minds of the people were in an inflamed state, the Lord graciously, and in a very remarkable manner, rescued us from the imminent danger to which we were exposed. He raised up a few of the most respectable and influential men among them to speak on our behalf, and to prove to the people that