

THE COLONIAL CHURCHMAN.

"BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE..... Eph. 2 c. 20 v.

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Further Extracts from the Society's Reports.

EAST INDIES.

Extracts from a Letter from the Bishop of Calcutta.

Bishop's Palace, Calcutta, April 10, 1834,

Rev. Sir,—I Begin with assuring the Society that all I have said on the subject of Bishop's College, in my former letter, I would wish to confirm. It is capable of becoming the centre of Missionary proceedings in India. The temporary delays and embarrassments attending its first ten or twenty years, I think nothing of. A college is of slow growth; confidence and efficiency are the offspring of many circumstances and many benedictions, which no human means can command. It is a grand thing to have the College at all; there it stands, erected by the piety of England, complete in all its parts, and entirely successful as a design and platform for future good. Imagine only that all was now to be begun, and you may at once conclude it never would be ventured upon, considering the present temper of men's minds. Let not, then, the Venerable Society be discouraged; every year accumulates the experience by which the following years are to be guided. You have had an immense advantage in the first Principal, whose learning, talents, reputation, piety, adorn the Academical Indian Institute which he is gradually forming. You may, hereafter, have others, endowed with the particular talents which the present Principal wants, but I conceive you can never replace Dr. Mill, in many respects very essential to a College. Whenever he quits his post, he will carry with him the regrets of all competent judges of his various high qualifications.

Let me quote the words of the first distinguished Prelate of this see, and I pass to another subject:—
"Money will do nothing without men. We must have able instruments... with heads full of sense and hearts full of zeal... all the good sense in the world, and talents the most powerful, will do nothing without an inextinguishable ardour in this holy cause. They must count it gain, though at any cost, to be means of bringing over men to Christ. All their talents and all their understanding must converge, as it were, to that one point; it must be the focus of all their deliberation, and endeavours, and desires: and I would venture to suggest, that a little excess on the side of zeal should be no disqualification."

The Missions at Tallygunge and Gungeree, under the Society's Missionary, the Rev. D. Jones, aided by the Catechist Driberg, are proceeding excellently. I have twice been over, since I last wrote, on the pleasing duty of examining the adult candidates for baptism, and addressing to them an exhortation, translated, clause by clause, by the Missionary. The report will detail particulars. This young Missionary, let it be remembered, was entirely brought up at Bishop's College,—one such Missionary is a great success. I hope to admit him to Priests' orders on Trinity Sunday, and I never think of him without some thankfulness to that God whose grace has rendered him what he is, and has, thus far, crowned his labours.

A most anxious question has come before me from Tanjore and the Southern Missions. To my infinite surprise I found that the heathen system of Caste, the very nucleus of the whole Hindoo abominations, had crept into the Southern churches, and was sapping all the power of Christianity amongst them. Between one hundred and sixty and one hundred and seventy relapses to Paganism had occurred in one year; and the Archdeacon of Madras, and the Secretary of the Madras Propagation Society Committee, represented to me that the Churches were becoming more than half heathen. I found upon inquiry that the mild treatment of my honoured and revered predecessor, Bishop Heber, had been abused to an increase of the evil, and that the indulgent course of some of the Reverend Missionaries had failed of abating, if it had not augmented, the mischief. Heathen marks were retained on the countenance; heathen processions and

ceremonies were observed at marriages and funerals; the degradation of the mass of the congregations was as debasing as before their christian profession,—exclusion from the same division of the church,—approach to the table of the Lord forbidden in common,—reception for religious teaching into the houses of those of superior caste denied,—the sponsors, except of equal caste, declined,—separate spots and divisions in the burial-ground imposed,—in short, the impassable barrier of Brahminical caste erected again, which condemns the one class of mankind to perpetual debasement, and elevates the other to a disproportionate pride,—and by which all the intercommunity of the body of Christ is violated and destroyed.

After examining the question with all care, I sent my directions to discontinue all observances arising from caste in the Church, so far as religious ordinances and sacraments were concerned. Civil and domestic relations I exempted from express censure. I confined myself to the annihilation of usages of caste in the Church. The rest I left to find their level by degrees; though, perhaps, I ought to have insisted, as I think the Apostles would, on their coming out entirely from amongst the Heathen in their whole walk and in all respects.

I have, of course, been careful to point out that these heathenish distinctions of caste, in matters of religion was a totally different thing from those natural and gentle gradations of society which subsist in christian nations, (arising from age, station, birth, talents, diligence, success, &c. &c.) and which Christianity recognises and encourages, as she does every thing else which is really for the good of man. The penalty consequent on pertinacious disobedience to my award, will be, exclusion from the sacred bonds which are thus, in fact, burst asunder by their own act; and the loss of those Missionary employments of which they proclaim themselves unworthy. Civil punishment or damage there will be none; and a return to the communion of the faithful will be open to the lapsed, on bare testimony of penitence and obedience.

Such is a brief outline of the most difficult and painful task to which I have as yet been called, and the success of which I commit to Almighty God, our Saviour, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and to the prayers of the Venerable Society.

I have little more to add on the general prospects of the great cause. My impression is, that the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel will shine brighter than ever in India. Every thing indicates the gradual decay of a system of abominable idolatry, inconsistent not merely with the first dictates of natural religion, but with the peace, purity, and improvement of ordinary society,—a system in contradiction to all the foundations of natural, moral, and philosophical truth,—which chronology and astronomy, and even geography, when well taught, must overturn,—and which can never hold out when the tide of European knowledge and intercourse, under the new Charter Bill, shall have poured its streams through the land.

How best to direct the inquiring Hindoo, ashamed of his own system, to the pure faith of Christ,—how best to guard him from the pride of intellect first launching forth into discovery,—how best to prevent a wretched scepticism from succeeding to a blind credulity of understanding,—how best to impregnate education with the seeds at least of vital Christianity,—how best to make the transition safest from the intellectual and moral associations of a metaphysical abstraction, united with the grossest derelictions in the practice of the primary virtues,—these are questions of the deepest interest, and touching on many very embarrassing difficulties.

The Venerable Society, with its experience in Christian Missions for more than a century, and with its Bishop's College now in operation, is admirably adapted for taking a large share in the blessed work. The best understanding now subsists between the Society's labourers and those of the Church Missionary

Institution; and it will be my study to prevent collisions with other bodies of Christians, not of our Church, whether from England or America. Our strength is boldness and consistency in our principles, with charity towards others.

The measure of the Divine blessing which may be vouchsafed to us, under the auspices of the Venerable Society, at different times and in different places, will doubtless bear some proportion to the degree of our humility, our heartfelt love to our Saviour, our plainness and simplicity in diffusing the peculiar doctrines of his grace, and our fervent prayers for the influence of his Spirit. In other words, the character of the men sent out, and the temper of the authorities at home and in India, by whom they are guided, will be the turning points. It will be my earnest study, during the uncertain period (short, however, at best,) of health, and capacity of exertion, which may remain for me, to do all in my power to aid your immensely important labours, and to leave to my successor the diocese of India somewhat advanced in its ordinary, as well as its missionary relations. In every respect I shall endeavour to understand first, and then execute, the wishes of my honoured and beloved Archbishop and metropolitan, under whom I rejoice to know I am placed, and whose approbation I shall labour to deserve. I shall next employ the men you send me out to the very best purposes I can, assisted by the advice of the Venerable Archdeacons, the Principal and Professors of Bishop's College, and the senior Clergy. I shall follow on next with such series of schools as your Society, and that for Promoting Christian Knowledge; shall encourage us to maintain. The correction, also, and improvement of the existing Translations of the Holy Scriptures, and the Book of Common Prayer, will engage my closest attention. A superintending eye cast over the working of all this machinery, the ordination of suitable candidates for the ministry of the Gospel, the confirmation of the young, (two hundred and three I confirmed last month, in addition to four hundred and sixty-nine in 1833; which, when added to Bishop Turner's number in 1830, makes nine hundred and eighty-five in four years, of whom more than one hundred and fifty were native converts,) the mild exercise of discipline and jurisdiction, the aid of personal intercourse by a monthly synod with the Clergy around Calcutta, the delivery of episcopal charges at suitable intervals, together with the constant preaching of God's word in the Churches, fixed and Missionary, within reach of the presidency, (I have delivered four or five sermons to the native congregations by means of interpreters;) these various duties do, and will, occupy my best attention more and more.

Impartiality in the administration of my peculiar functions, thorough attachment to my own particular Church, kindness and discretion under difficulties, and real christian benevolence towards all who bear that sacred name, are what I shall aim at in pursuing these branches of duty.

And then with my heavenly Master will rest the success, the length or brevity of my ministry, the circumstances of trial in which I may be placed, the measure of aid afforded by the civil government, and the confidence I may conciliate here and at home. And, finally, may the entire glory be ascribed for all that is effected, to the Father of lights, from whom every good and every perfect gift descends; whilst genuine humility of spirit attends all the exertions we make, and all the details we are compelled to give to others, of what we have done or attempted.

The Bishop adds under date 20th August, 1834—
My estimate of the wisdom and foresight of Bishop Middleton in the plan of Bishop's College, and of the liberality and perseverance of the Society, remains the same. The obstructions to its full efficiency (for it is even now efficient) are temporary, as I trust. God goes away by himself, says one of our old Bishops. All is working round. I doubt not Bishop's College will regain more than its original popularity by its