

MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCE.

THE IDOL, KALI.—CALCUTTA.—The metropolis of British India, derived its name from the Hindoo god Jesh Kali. At Kali Ghat, near to Calcutta, is a celebrated shrine where this goddess is worshipped with much pomp. Instances are recorded of wealthy Hindoos spending many thousand pounds at the same offerings at this shrine.

The image which is the object of this worship, represents a black female with four arms. One of her hands holds a scymitar, another the head of a giant, whom she is supposed to have slain in combat.

Her worshippers are taught to believe that the blood of a man is peculiarly acceptable to Kali. The sacrifice of a tiger, it is said, gives her pleasure for one hundred years; the blood of a lion for a man, one thousand years; but by the sacrifice of three men, she is pleased for one hundred thousand years.

The Rev. Mr. Percival, in his book entitled "Land of the Veda: India briefly described," says:—It must be remembered that the worship of this idol does not take place merely in the retired and sequestered parts of the country, but in the metropolis of our Indian empire, in the city of palaces, for the celebrated temple of Kali Ghat is in its suburbs; I have myself witnessed the processions of frantic idolaters in the most fashionable thoroughfares of the city. Crowds bring to pay adoration to her.

SELF-TORTURE.

"Let us now witness this act of devotion wherewith this monster is honoured. Hired by the shrine several men are stationed, with instruments of cruelty, in the forms of iron spikes, canes, rods, &c. The horrible spectacle now to be described will scarcely be believed, —it is however true. One man is pierced through the sides, when a couple of canes are inserted, which being held by his companions, he dances to and fro on them; another has his tongue pierced, and at once passes through the aperture a living snake. Another has his arm perforated, and passes through the opening an iron rod; and another, having his tongue bored through, inserts in the orifice a rod of iron. Thus the work of cruelty proceeds for a long time; group after group, consisting of ten or a dozen, comes up and undergoes the horrible operation. The successive groups pass together to an elevated platform opposite the idol. All being arranged, the crowd having surrounded the sacred precincts, the work of slaughter commences, the goats are decapitated and the court swims with blood. Now the ingredients prepared for the purpose are thrown on the fire, and as the smoke and flame ascend, the music commences from numerous instruments, making the most uproarious and discordant noise that can be imagined. Now the distinguished actors in this bloody and fiendish drama commence their gesticulations, and heighten the cruelty of their voluntary inflictions, by using various methods for giving effect to the meritorious proceedings being enacted. The instruments of torture, be they rods, or canes, or spikes, or ropes, or snakes, are pulled to and fro in the lacerated flesh, till it pours forth a fresh stream that is to delight the renowned and beloved object of worship. The crowd becomes frantic with excitement, and in loudest acclamation cry out, Victory to Kali! Victory to the great Kali! They afterwards parade the chief thoroughfares, accompanied by the horrid din produced by trumpets, gongs, cymbals, pipes and drums. The last mentioned are generally surrounded by bunches of black and white ostrich feathers, which give an expression of mock triumph that is highly suitable to the occasion. No description can convey an adequate idea of the unrelenting character of these processions, as I have witnessed them in the streets of Calcutta.

A CONTRAST.

"It may be enough to suggest the contrast between these scenes of cruel phrensy and the peaceful tranquillizing worship of the Christian sanctuary. Here true, there are acclamations of praise, and bursts of triumph; but the jubiliant sound is the voice of melody and the sound of them that keep holy day. How different the subjective state, and the objective truth incident to the solemn gatherings for the worship of Almighty God in the Church of Christ! The grateful feeling produced by the apprehended immortality of redeeming love, and the blessed prospect that before the mind by an awakened and glorified Saviour, how they differ from those sanguinary rites and degraded scenes just described! How grateful ought the Christian to be in the enjoyment of such privilege, and how zealous to extend them to those who are brutified by the cruel practices of a worshipful idolatry.

"It must surely be a matter of deep regret to

every enlightened Christian to hasten the proclamation of that Gospel which alone can effect the deliverance of our fellow-men from the cruel bondage, in which they most remain willing captives till its spread restores them free. What the Church in ancient times did for the victims of a horrid and soul-debasing Druidism in Britain, that Church, if inspired into the same spirit, must feel impelled to attempt for the millions of India who are still the hapless bondmen of an equally degrading system—Brahminism.—*Monthly Pa. S.P.C.*

SELECTIONS.

The *Herald* correspondent gives an interesting account of a survey of Sebastopol, not very favourable, however, to the progress of the allies, who are surprised at the inexhaustible warlike supplies of the fortress:—

"For one gun of ours, we have dismounted ten of theirs, and yet they seem to replace them during the night as if by magic. The wall round Sebastopol is as yet untouched by us, and so, of course, are the stone forts and bastions which defend its angles. Your readers must distinctly understand that up to the present time we have only been contending against the tremendous earthworks which the Russians have thrown up outside the regular defences of the town. Towards destroying these we have literally done nothing. Their mud fort, flag-staff battery, garden battery, redan battery, barrack battery, and circular battery, look as fresh and are as well manned as the day we first opened fire."

This was written on the 28th ult. On the 10th of December having fully reconnoitred the town, for the purpose of seeing what damage had been done, he reports:—"Sebastopol is not in ruins, and what is more important still, its defences are four times stronger and more vigorous than the first day we opened fire."

"To satisfy myself on this point beyond all possibility of doubt, I determined to visit the 'ovens,' our most advanced picket post, within 200 yards of the Russian batteries and close overlooking the town and harbour. It is perfectly easy to approach this place now, for a covered way has been constructed to it, and both sides here, comparatively speaking, ceased firing for some time. I therefore got to the ovens easily, and lying under shelter of a broken wall, was enabled, with my glass, to survey the whole town minutely. I confess I never saw the town under such favourable circumstances. Except now and then, from an occasional Russian gun, there was no smoke, and the sky being lowering and heavy, objects could be distinguished with unusual clearness. At the first glance, I was led to suppose that the town had in reality been much injured, for all the little huts and storehouses connected with the dockyards were indeed in ruins. But, changing my point of view for one more lofty, I was soon convinced of my mistake. The real damage inflicted on the town of Sebastopol amounts to this:—all the huts used by the dockyard laborers, and the Turkish parts of the town outside the walls, are nearly destroyed—that is, laid almost level with the earth. This quarter appears to be the only dirty and wretched part of Sebastopol—something of the same kind as our Ratcliff-highway. The walls are here and there marked with shot, but most unquestionably as defences, they are still uninjured. One large barrack inside the walls against which our fire, as a government building, has been particularly directed, is riddled in every part and most of its roof destroyed. The same is the case with about 60 or 70 of the houses nearest to the walls, but beyond this nothing has been done. Had any of the principal mansions more to the centre of the town been injured, it would be easily seen, as most of them are detached, and all are white as snow, and instantly show a shot-mark. The splendid structure which we called the "Pantheon"—the Government House—and, indeed 18-20ths of the buildings, show no trace of injury. The streets which I could see, and which, of course, were these nearest to our batteries, were all in a most enviable state of cleanliness and good order. In these were numerous bodies of troops lounging about unconcernedly, with their muskets piled upon the pavements. Many civilians passed constantly to and fro, and now and then an ammunition waggon; but I saw no trace of either women or children, or vehicles of the ordinary description."

So much for the aspect of the town itself. Of the earthworks round Sebastopol, he says, it is more difficult to speak with accuracy:—

By examining all these defences that of them it is quite impossible to gain at once a clear and extensive view. As far as I can judge from traversing nearly 30-miles of the allied lines, the enemy's batteries appeared generally in good working order. Only in one

or two instances were their embrasures much damaged. I was closed up when a gun in the batteries—and three shakings, I was informed by our officers, proved to be merely temporary, as the enemy always manages to replace their artillery in twelve or fifteen minutes. I myself have seen them do so within three days. The whole of the enemy's batteries are now protected by a deep ditch in front, with regular abatis and covered approaches and chevaux de frise. From this it is evident that they are guarding against, and not, for an assault. But it is principally of the north side that I wish to speak. I was (before) set out upon my survey that I should be astonished at the immensity of the Russian batteries, reaching from the head of the harbour to the east, right round to Starfort and St. Severals on the north, and all of which had only been unmasked two days previous. I knew something of the nature of Russian works and the energy of Russian perseverance, but still the tremendous extent of new redoubts and batteries which I then saw thrown up all around the city (St. Peter), round to the sea near Cape Constantine, along long lines of redoubts and batteries. Malta, Gibraltar, or the lines of Chatham—all in one, would be far less vulnerable than these formidable entrenchments, covered with infantry pits, and deep ditches in front, and protected by scraped banks, stockades, and masses of cannon. I have seen many of what is called first-class fortresses, but the present aspect of Sebastopol might vie with any. That which struck me more than all was a certain comeliness of face about these works which I have never yet seen attempted elsewhere—no, not even in the elaborate double of Chatham ridges. Every bastion was faced with stone; every embrasure perfect; every angle and scarp smoothed off with beautiful regularity, and the whole was rather an architectural embellishment than one of the most formidable kinds of defences known to modern warfare. It will scarcely be credited, but inside these lines were regular footpaths and made roads covered with gravel and loose stones, and laid out with as much neatness as if intended to pass through private gardens. I could hardly believe my eyes when these latter adornments were pointed out to me, but there they were sure enough. It must have taken the enemy nearly as much time to make it as the batteries, and as a matter of course, beyond the mere effect of the bravado—such as it is—they are wholly and entirely useless. Yet, useless as they are, they have been made as if to show us how little the progress of our siege employs or impedes their numerous garrison."

The French appear to have made better progress:—

"On our extreme left the French push the enemy closely. They have not lately advanced their works but their third parallel is still within 300 yards of the Russian batteries, and only 400 or 500 from the base outside the walls. The part of the town opposed to the French is certainly more injured than on our side—of course, because of their being nearer their guns have longer range. The mud fort, which at the commencement of the siege mounted nearly 40 guns is now almost untenable, and rarely fired. The Quarantine Fort of stone is almost ruined; and is certain to be completely destroyed the instant we resume our fire but the Flag Staff earthwork, which did the French so much injury, is still, I regret to say, almost as strong as ever. However, with regard to this latter opponent, our allies speak most confidently of being able to dispose of it when they wish. On this point I shall only say that I think their conjectures are well-founded. In spite of the wet weather and heavy state of the roads, the French have managed somehow or other to replace their old siege guns with fresh, and throw up several new batteries of considerable strength. They have 147 new guns and mortars already placed, and only wait until our fresh ordnance is in position to recommence their fire."

An officer of the 11th says he has been quite a lion since the battle of Inkermann, from his adventures on that day, being in command of one of the advanced pickets. They were on the point of being relieved when the Russian firing commenced.

"We held the place about three-quarters of an hour until the Russians began to advance upon the river towards us, and this gave us in flank. We then, finding their fire began to tell, commenced a retreat towards camp, but you may imagine our dismay in finding after we had only gained about one hundred yards, that the enemy had already driven in our pickets on the hills, and had got a mile or