

## Mission Field.

### REMINISCENCES OF BISHOP CROWTHER.

The late Bishop Crowther was almost as remarkable for his personal character as for his wonderful history. He was always conspicuous for his studiousness, intelligence, industry, cheerfulness and practical sagacity. A writer in the *Church Missionary Intelligencer* says of him: "When he was landed at Sierra Leone, just rescued from the hold of a Portuguese slaver, after his first day at school he begged a halfpenny from his countrymen to buy an alphabet-card for himself; after six months he could read the New Testament; and after five years he was admitted the first on the roll of students of Fourah Bay College, of which a few months later he was a tutor. He was the first of his countrymen to be admitted to Holy Orders, and Bishop Blomfield, who ordained him Deacon and Priest in 1843, referred to him, in preaching the society's anniversary sermon the following year, as 'well qualified, even in point of knowledge,' to communicate to others the saving truths which he had himself embraced. In this connection the following interesting reminiscences lately communicated to the *Record* newspaper may be quoted. The Rev. C. F. Child, who was principal of the Islington college at the time when Samuel Crowther was studying there previous to his ordination, writes: 'It was, and is, the custom to test the progress of our students by holding terminal and annual examinations. The former we managed ourselves; the latter were conducted by graduates of some mark from our own universities. On one occasion the examiner was the late Rev. James Scholefield, regius professor of Greek in the University of Cambridge. It should here be mentioned that those were the days of very general scepticism as to the mental powers of the African. Not a few were forward in affirming that he did not properly belong to the genus *homo*. They admitted that he was capable of culture, and in some tribes at least had developed considerable mechanical skill. But whatever his attainments, they stoutly maintained that he lacked the logical faculty, and was incapable alike of conducting and understanding an argument. It so happened that among the papers on the occasion referred to was one on Paley's 'Evidences of Christianity.' At the conclusion of the examination, the Professor said: 'I should like, with your permission, to take young Crowther's answers to these Paley questions back with me to Cambridge and there read a few of them in the combination-room to certain of my old Trinity friends. If, after hearing that young African's answers, they still contend that he does not possess a logical faculty, they will tempt us to question whether they do not lack certain other faculties of at least equal importance, such as common fairness of judgment and Christian candor.' While Prebendary Newell, rector of Chiselborough, Somerset-

shire, says: 'I have a reminiscence of Bishop Crowther which may be of interest, as showing what manner of man he was. Crowther was ordained Priest by the Bishop of London (Blomfield) at Fulban Parish church on October 1st, 1843. I received Deacon's Orders at the same time and place. At breakfast in the palace, previous to the ordination, sitting next the Bishop, he called my attention to Crowther, and remarked: 'That man is no mean scholar; his examination-papers were capital, and his Latin remarkably good.'"

It is certain that, whether it was due to a natural superiority of intellect, or to his plodding industry and thorough trustworthiness, Samuel Crowther was always to the front when any work had to be done, and that not by reason of any self-asserting precocity, but by the deliberate election of those best able to judge. No doubt his practical sagacity and sobriety of judgment had much to do with the confidence which he inspired, and certainly in this respect he justified to the full his successive appointments to arduous and difficult posts. In dealing with heathen chiefs and others, whether in religious controversy or in palavers of a more secular character his directness and transparent simplicity of purpose won their confidence, and appropriate illustrations were seldom wanting to convince their judgment.

Mr. Eugene Stock gives, in the *Gleaner*, the following illustration of how strangely appropriate the Bishop could be in his speeches while he was in England: "The last time he was in England he was present at the great general missionary conference of 1888. By some curious arrangement he was asked to speak, not on Africa, but on woman's work! It was, I think, the fullest meeting of the week: the large Exter Hall was thronged; he had to speak first; what would he do? He just told two stories: first, how it was a woman, a missionary's wife, who taught him to know Christ; and secondly, how a certain chief on the Niger was changed from an opponent to a friend of the mission by finding that girls at the school were taught to cook! The delight of the great assembly knew no bounds; and it seemed to me the happiest specimen of adaptation to environment I had ever seen."—*Spirit of Missions N. Y.*

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