

came, of course, not so much individual salvation as national restoration. The rival to Christ was not so much Satan as Cæsar; the opposing force not so much sin in the hearts of men as power in the hands of Herod. Why Christ, therefore, at the height of His popularity, did not take the sceptre and reign, was a mystery to John. "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Now, that Jewish hope was not realized, but we have something better in its place. We have the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Christ did overthrow Cæsar; Rome has vanished. And our hope is that ultimately and surely

"Jesus shall reign where e'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run."

But the mystery still remains. Why does He not put forth His power and reign? "Art thou he that should come?" Why still the horrors of the mission field? Why still the sad reverses to the soldiers of the cross? And the only answer which we receive is, "Behold the works that I am doing, and trust."

II. JESUS' ANSWER.

1. *The silence of the Lord.* Evidently the Saviour must have detained the messengers of John. We know not how long, but sufficiently long for them to "hear and see." They were to be ear and eye witnesses of Christ's works to their imprisoned master. And all that time the Saviour was silent. No answer was given to the question; no explanation of His position; no apology for His conduct. Oh, the silences of God! How profound at times, how mysterious! Think of the circumstances surrounding the death of Bishop Hannington at Busoga, Eastern Equatorial Africa, on Oct. 31, 1885, by order of King Mwanga, and the heavens silent. Think of the circumstances surrounding the awful death of Robert Stewart, his wife, children and helpers, at Fu Kien, China, on August 1, 1895, and the heavens silent. And so we feel the presence, the awful presence, of permitted mystery in the Lord's work. And what can we say? Only this: "Human action does not always evidence its purpose—much less does God's. The man who is going to rear a lofty edifice begins by digging deep into the earth. Descent

is the first essential of the firm and enduring ascent. So God seems to us, in our shortness of sight and lack of information, often to move in a direction contrariwise to His supposed purpose. He wants His cause to go forward, and He forthwith takes away its leading exponent. To him who believes in the all-wisdom and infinite beneficence of God, these seemingly inexplicable dispensations ought to be the best evidence that there is a distinct purpose in it. If the explanation seems sure and easy to man, there might be some doubt about it being correct. Looking at the Infinite, the inexplicable is its own sufficient explanation. It is the best evidence of God's righteous purpose for the creatures of His love."

2. *The Lord always gives us sufficient ground for our faith.* "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see." To give sight to the blind, to make the lame walk, to cleanse the leper, to raise the dead, is surely the work of God. The one who can do that is Divine. He is Divine in beneficence and power. One comfort may be in danger when we hear of or read about the awful cost of extending Christ's Kingdom upon the earth, but our faith never, while we can behold on all hands the marvellous, convincing, overpowering evidence of the Lord's presence and power in the world.

3. *The highest faith is that which enables us to follow where we cannot see, and trust where we cannot understand.* "Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me." John the Baptist sought mental satisfaction with regard to the unexplainable, at the hands of Jesus; Thomas sought physical satisfaction when he asked to thrust his hand into the side of the risen Christ. It is all the same, a desire to walk by sight. It is better to walk by faith.

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

BERNARD BRYAN.

DIOCESE OF NORTH CHINA.

It is interesting to note, in view of the present disturbed state of affairs in China, that the Diocese of North China, which was founded in 1880, consists of the six northern provinces of China, and is six or eight times the size of England. The population is estimated at between eighty and a hundred millions. The staff of the North China Mission, headed by Bishop Charles Perry Scott, consists of thirteen or fourteen clergy. Bishop Scott has been labouring in China for a little more than a quarter of a century.



BISHOP SCOTT, OF NORTH CHINA.

In 1874, he—being then curate of St. Peter's, Eaton square—offered himself as a missionary, went out to China, and was stationed at Chefoo, one of the treaty ports on the Gulf of Pechili. At that time the missions of the Church, both in North China and Mid-China, were under Bishop Russell, whose cathedral was at Shanghai. In 1879 Bishop Russell made the present Bishop of North China an Hon. Canon of his cathedral. When the new diocese for North China was formed, Archbishop Tait selected Mr. Scott to be the first Bishop.

ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER.

"They helped every one his neighbour, and everyone said to his brother, be of good courage," Isa. xli. 6. The people described in