

THE CANADIAN CHURCH MAGAZINE

• • AND MISSION NEWS • •

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada.

Vol. V.

TORONTO, AUGUST, 1891

No. 62.

1883 HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

No. 62.—RT. REV. J. C. WHITLEY, FIRST BISHOP OF CHOTA NAGPORE.

CHOTA NAGPORE is a large hill country province in the Bengal Presidency nearly 200 miles west of Calcutta, in the Central Indian plateau, which is more than 2,000 feet above the level of the sea, and extends over an area of 7,000 square miles. It is a well wooded and undulating country, with a climate more nearly approaching that of Europe than is generally found in India. Its principal inhabitants are the aboriginal tribes known by the name of Kol (or Kohl), whose religion, if it can be called a religion, consists in the propitiation of evil spirits. They all believe in witchcraft.

In 1844 John Gossner sent out from Berlin to Calcutta four Lutheran Missionaries, leaving it to them to find out on their arrival where it would be best for them to plant themselves. Their sender was a remarkable man. Born in Bavaria in 1773, he was ordained a priest in the Roman Church in 1796. He worked hard and zealously in several parishes. His preaching fell under the suspicion of his ecclesiastical superiors, and he was subjected to a searching inquiry and imprisonment. He was subsequently reinstated in his office, and eventually took a charge in Munich. Here he set about a work he had long contemplated—a translation into German of the New Testament. It was a fresh translation, not a revision of Luther's, though it retained,

where it was possible, the fine old German of that version. This translation was adopted by the British Bible Society. After moving from Munich to Dusseldorf and St. Petersburg (whence he was banished), he went to Leipsic, where he spent three years. It was there that his connection with the Church of Rome ceased. He was excommunicated, and resolved to seek admission into the German Evangelical Church. Gossner, after much opposition, was appointed pastor of a church in Berlin. His first impulse to undertake Foreign Mission work arose from his reading translations of English Missionary Tracts. When seventy years old he learnt

the English language so as to be able to read more about missions. The four missionaries whom he sent to Calcutta were waiting, uncertain which way to go, when they noticed among the coolies repairing the streets some people of a peculiar type of countenance. The missionaries spoke to them, and made inquiries, from which they found that they were Kols from Chôta Nagpore, and that they belonged to tribes that had never heard



*Yours sincerely,
J. C. Whitley*

FIRST BISHOP OF CHOTA NAGPORE.

of the Gospel, and were steeped in ignorance and superstition. Here, then, was what these missionaries were looking for—a field for Mission-work. They started at once for Ranchi, the seat of the local government in Chôta Nagpore, and arrived there in March 1845. For five years these good men laboured among the Kols amid discomfort and privation, having but small provision for their wants, building houses with their own hands, and often driven with stones out of the villages—and at the end of these five years they had not made a single convert. In