

GENERAL LITERATURE.

ELIOT, THE APOSTLE OF THE INDIANS.

(From a Review of *Carne's Lives of Eminent Missionaries, in the Wesleyan Magazine.*)

THE Christian Missionary, in the faithful discharge of his high calling, in imitation of apostolic example, "preaching among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ," occupies the most exalted station in the Church of God. No language can adequately represent the importance, the transcendent value, of his labours; operating, as they do, not only on the temporal, but the immortal interests of men; and extending in their effects to all future generations. And yet, scarcely any class of men have been treated with greater injustice by an irreligious word. Even those eminent men whose names adorn the present volume, and whose praise is in all the churches, have obtained but slight notice in the annals of our literature. Their characters have been traduced, their motives impugned, their talents depreciated, and even their glorious object itself frequently treated with contempt.

In many cases it is curious to observe, amongst our literary travellers, a careful avoidance of all that is doing, or that has been done, in the Missionary field: just as if no such object was contemplated by Christianity as the conversion of the Heathen.—Or if the subject be casually introduced, we at once perceive an extreme eagerness to explore defects, real or imaginary, and to misrepresent the principles and labours of men who are devoting all their powers of mind and body, and even life itself, to save the most wretched outcasts of the human family.

Mr. Carne first presents us with a very interesting memoir of the venerable Eliot, so justly called "The Apostle of the Indians." The character of the man, the particular sphere of his labours, the ardent zeal which animated and sustained his extraordinary exertions, together with his eminent success, have all conspired to invest his name with an imperishable lustre. It is particularly pleasing to advert to the commencement of that piety which was the grand element of his character, and which ever after directed his course.

"On leaving Cambridge he was invited to reside with the Rev. Thomas Hooker, a distinguished Divine who, on account of his nonconformity, was suspended from his ministry at Chelmsford, in Essex. He then established a school at the request of some of his friends, in the village of Little-Baddow. Eliot became his assistant: his services were very useful as well as acceptable to the former, who soon took a strong interest in his welfare; won by his amiable manners, as well as by the liveliness and energy of his converse, the more striking, as his exterior did not promise any such.

"Eliot ever after spoke of his residence at Little-Baddow as the beginning of all his happiness: till then he had learning, talent and ambition to turn them to the best account; but till he came to the dwelling of Hooker he never knew religion, he said, in its power and beauty. The change was gentle and gradual that led the gifted scholar to the richness of Christ; many a conversation did he and his friend Hooker hold together, and weeks and months passed away, before he yielded. The lonely communion with his own heart was not neglected, often retiring into the woods around the village. Hooker let his spirit calmly take its course; for he saw that it was of a character slow to embrace, but unchangeable and even impetuous when decided. He was right; and Eliot, after a while, looked abroad into the world with a changed hope and purpose. His friend who had been the means of this change directed his thoughts to the ministry. The situation of things in England was unfavorable, for a young Divine who had embraced Hooker's opinions; and Eliot made the bold

choice of going to America, where a wide and free career was open to him."

He arrived in New England at the latter end of the year 1631; and soon after became a pastor of a congregation at Roxbury, composed chiefly of persons who fled from persecution, and who gladly exposed themselves to all the privations and difficulties of a wild and uncultivated country, that they and their families might enjoy the high privilege of serving God according to their consciences.

"The scene of action at Roxbury was confined: a town newly reared; a people motley and various; many old planters devoted to agriculture, who loved to make the land bare to the eye, and cut down the luxuriant woods; many traders also, and frequently new dwellers arrived from England, of varying and perhaps discordant creeds, &c. No small skill was required to be a useful as well as favourite Minister to all people: but for sixty years that he filled this office, no discord was known to arise, no unkind or estranged feeling, even for a moment.

"The Pastor took care it was said, that his sermons should be the result of personal observation, as well as private study. He went to the forest where the settler was painfully clearing his way, and stood beneath the ancient trees and talked with him. While thus seeking the good of his people, he was, in the meantime, toiling for the greater work that was soon to occupy him, though he hardly could have dreamed of its extent or glory."

Eliot seems early to have formed his purpose of introducing the Gospel amongst the poor Indians, into whose vicinity he had been providentially brought; but it was impossible for him to conceal from himself the almost insurmountable obstacles which opposed such an undertaking; not merely from the extreme moral degradation and ferocious habits of these children of the desert, but from their strange and barbarous language,—the enormous length of many of its words, that allowed but a slow interchange of ideas; the harshness of the sound, and the little affinity to European tongues. "It was enough," says his biographer, "to make one stand aghast; for the simple words, 'our question,' were expressed by an Indian word of forty-three letters; and 'our loves' by one of thirty two." But Eliot's determined resolution and persevering diligence conquered every difficulty; and, notwithstanding the justness of Mather's witty observation, that "many of the words were so prodigiously long, that one would think that they had been growing in length ever since the confusion of Babel;" yet he so completely mastered the language, as to compose and publish his "Indian Grammar;" at the end of which laborious work he wrote "Prayers and pains, through faith in Christ Jesus, will do anything." In addition to this, he compiled two Catechisms in the Indian language, and translated "Baxter's Call to the Unconverted," "The Practice of Piety," and afterwards, the whole of the Old and New Testaments. Of the latter work, of such immense labour, it is said that it was the first Bible that was ever printed in America.

After many years of diligent and devout preparations for his great undertaking, he at length, in the year 1646, commenced his arduous work. Mr. Carne's account of this first visit to the Indians is too striking to be omitted:—

"On the 28th of October he set out from his home, in company with three friends, to the nearest Indian settlement. He had previously sent to give this tribe notice of his coming; and a very large number was collected from all quarters. If the savages expected the coming of their guest, of whose name they had often heard, to be like that of a warrior, or Sachem, they were greatly deceived. They saw Eliot, on

foot, drawing near with his companions; his translation of the Scriptures, like a calumet of peace and love, in his hand. He was met by their Chief Wanbon, who conducted him to a large wigwam. After a short rest, Eliot went into the open air, and standing on a grassy mound while the people formed around him in all the stillness of strong surprise and curiosity, he prayed in the English tongue, as if he could not address Heaven in a language both strange and new; and then preached for an hour in their own tongue, and gave a clear and simple account of the religion of Christ, of his character and life, of the blessed state of those who believe in him. He said it was a glorious and affecting spectacle to see a company of perishing forlorn outcasts, so drinking in the word of salvation. The impressions which this discourse produced were of a very favourable nature: as far as the Chief Wanbon was concerned, they were never effaced. Afterwards the guest passed several hours conversing with the Indians, and answering their questions. When the night came, he returned to the tent with the Chief, and the people entered their wigwams, or lay around and slept on the grass. What were Eliot's feelings on this night? At last the longing of years was accomplished, the fruit of his prayers was given to him. At a second interview, a few of the Chief's friends alone remained, after the people were retired. One of the Christians perceived an Indian who was hanging down his head, weeping: the former went to him, and spoke encouraging words; after which he turned his face to the wall and wept yet more abundantly; soon after he rose and went out. 'When they told me of his tears,' said Eliot, 'we resolved to go forth and follow him. The proud Indian's spirit was quite broken: at last we parted, greatly rejoicing for such sorrowing.'

Eliot's grand aim was not to effect a partial reformation, much less to make them Christians in name only; but to convert them to the real life and power of Christianity. Unlike the Jesuit Missionaries, he withheld no part of the "counsel of God," made no compromise with any principle or habit which was opposed to the holiness of the Gospel, but laid the axe at once to the root of the tree of corruption, looking for and solely depending upon that grace without which he well knew all his efforts would be in vain.

To transform such "doleful creatures, the veriest ruins of mankind," as Mather describes them, into real Christians, and exemplary members of civilized society, was more than human wisdom or power could effect.—The right means, it is true, were applied; but the triumphant success was achieved by Him "who gave testimony to the word of his grace."

In the various obstacles and dangers he had to encounter, he was by no means taken by surprise. He knew what he had to expect, and deliberately counted the cost. In his various Missionary excursions through the dreary wilds, in the most inclement seasons, he was often subjected to the greatest hardships and privations. "I was not dry," says he, "night nor day, from the third day to the sixth, but so travelled: and at night I pull off my boots, wring my stockings, and on with them again, and so continued; yet God helped me. I considered that word, 'Endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.'" (2 Tim. ii. 3.)

But his perils among the Heathen were yet greater than those he experienced from either the waters or the wilderness. The *Powaws*, or the Priests, were amongst the most formidable and inveterate enemies. They felt that "their craft was in danger." They pretended to have great power both over the soul and body; and "terrified the people with the threats of their *Manitow*, or evil spirit. Often in the woods, and at the departure of day, the hunters fancied they saw him in the form of a stag or bear, whom they could neither overtake nor subdue; and from whose pur-