

## MISSION FIELD.

## CALCUTTA.

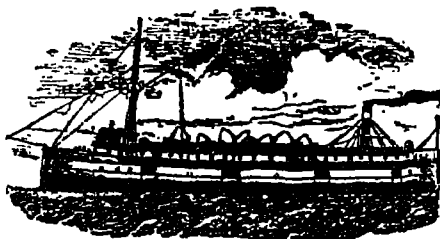
On June 24th, the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, there was a celebration of the Centenary of the consecration of St. John's Church, Calcutta. The following facts were given by the Rev. H. Whitehead, of Bishop's College, in his sermon on the occasion: "The Centenary of St. John's Church was an interesting and important event, not simply because it was one of the two English churches in Calcutta which could boast of a history and work of a hundred years, but also because its history had been in a very marked way connected with the general history of the English Church in India. The first English Church in Calcutta was that of old St. John's, which stood just westward of 'Writer's Buildings.' It was originally built in 1715, when, as the historian remarked, 'the settlers built a house to the glory of God, and continued to disregard His laws for many years afterwards.' This Church had a beautiful spire, which was afterwards blown down by a hurricane; and the building was finally demolished by the soldiers of Suraj-ad-Dowla in the year 1756, the year of the Black Hole. Then for fourteen years Calcutta was without an English Church, though there was a community residing there of wealthy merchants, living in pomp and luxury and amassing large fortunes. One of them writing home said: 'We looked no further than the provision of the company's investment. We sought advantages to our trade with the selfish ingenuity of merchants; and our servants were trained in the same notions. The credit of a good bargain was the utmost scope of their ambition.' Religious duties were neglected, and they became a godless community; it was some time before the heathen discovered that the English in India had any religion at all. Such influences must have done immense harm to the cause of Christianity in India. At last Calcutta possessed a church of its own. But it was not raised by the liberality or piety of the settlers, but by the munificence of a foreigner. A Swedish missionary, Kiernander, was invited to Calcutta by Clive in 1758. After remaining there for some years working as a missionary, he built what is known as 'the Old Church.' It was begun in 1767 and opened in 1770, and they called it by the Hebrew name of Beth Tephilla, the house of prayer. His work, though not blessed with any great immediate results, prepared the way for the better things. In 1787 the Church of St. John was completed, the whole of the cost, a lakh and a half, being raised by voluntary contributions. A special mandate from the Archbishop of Canterbury was issued for its consecration, and it was opened on June 24 in that year. The arrival of Lord Cornwallis led to a reform in the social and religious life of the British community in Calcutta, and a marked improvement followed, though the attendance at St. John's Church was at first very scanty.

Then followed the French Revolution, which produced a feeling of profound alarm and disgust among the English in India: infidelity fell into disavour, and the churches were filled with attentive congregations. When Bishop Middleton arrived in 1814, St. John's became the Cathedral of the Diocese, and continued to be so till the present Cathedral was built by Bishop Wilson in 1847. Mr. Whitehead went on to speak of the growth of the Church in India since that date: in 1814 one Bishop and fifteen clergy in the whole of India and Australia annexed to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Calcutta; there are now in Hindustan, Ceylon, and Barmah, nine bishops and 550 clergy of our Church: there are in Calcutta itself noble charities supported to a large extent by voluntary contributions, a proof to us that Christian life in this city is a reality, bringing forth the fruits of charity and liberality; yet there is before us in India a vast and increasing work. There hundreds of Christians who are still deprived entirely of the means of grace, and cut off from the influences of religion. There are thousands of our poor brethren, who are living in utter want and degradation, besides the millions of heathen who have never heard the name of Christ."

The Rev. A. S. Dyer, of Kidderpore, writes that it is proposed to commence in January, 1888, a periodical to be called the *Indian Church Quarterly*. Each number will contain about 130 pages, and will be devoted to the interests of the Church in India. Communications may be addressed to "the Editor, Parsonage, Kidderpore, Calcutta."

The Church in Calcutta has sustained a severe loss in the death, on June 29, of the Rev. Philip S. Smith of the Oxford Mission. Being out of health he had undertaken a journey to Ranikhet, partly to recruit his strength, and partly to enquire into an opening for Missionary enterprise in that distant part of India. The long and toilsome ride over the hills proved too much for his enfeebled frame, and he returned to Calcutta, halting for ten days at the Clergy House Alahabad, worse instead of better for his expedition. After his return to Calcutta he seemed to rally somewhat, but his complaint returned, and he finally succumbed to it at the S. P. G. house, Bullygunge, where he was under the care of Mr. and Mrs. Billing. He came out to India in March, 1883, and threw himself into the work of the Oxford Mission with great vigour and self-devotion, including lectures to natives, and the writing of articles for the weekly *Epiphany*, consisting of discussions with non-Christian correspondents, and replies to their objections. He had a remarkable power of attracting and influencing all with whom he was brought into contact, whether natives or Europeans, while the guilelessness and utter unworldliness of his character could not but be apparent to all. Few men have exhibited such humility, simplicity, and self-abnegation. The large concourse at his

funeral bore eloquent testimony not only to the wide-spread admiration and love which Mr. Smith had inspired among men of all creeds and shades of opinion, but also to the deep sympathy felt with the remaining members of the Oxford Mission in this new and severe blow which has fallen upon them.



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