

## Mission Field.

### THE HEALING OF THE NATIONS.

A MISSIONARY SERMON BY THE RIGHT REV. BRANSHY KEY, D.D., LORD BISHOP OF ST. JOHN'S KAFFRARIA.

Preached at the Provincial Synod.

"The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."—REVELATION xxii. 2.

I PROPOSE to-night to say a few words on a subject which may appear uninteresting to some and common place to others—the Missions of the Church in this country,—a subject which, nevertheless, should be of interest to every Churchman, and one which must soon occupy the attention of the Church much more really than it has in times past.

Speaking from the pulpit of this church, I cannot but recall how very dear to Bishop Gray were Missions to the Kafir or Bantu race. At the very outset of his episcopate he seems to have recognised the necessity incumbent on our Church of being a Missionary Church; and Bishops Armstrong, Cotterill, and Merriman ably seconded his efforts in forwarding the establishment of Missions in the Eastern Province of this Colony. Through Bishop Gray's special care it was that Mission work was pushed into Independent Kaffraria, which resulted afterwards in the formation of the Diocese of St. John's. He saw the necessity of this as early as 1850, when he travelled throughout the country as far as Natal. At the same time he planned a Mission in that country, and one for Zululand. Among the Barolong, at Thaba' Nchu, a Mission was begun as early as 1865, and since that flourishing Missions have grown up in Basutoland and Bechuanaland.

In all these our efforts the methods of work had to be learned, and I may say that most has been up to the present time tentative. We have had to learn often from the work of other denominations, and adapt their experience to our Church ways and Church principles, and in some cases there has been a difficulty in this adaptation. But though we confess (I speak, of course, for myself) that we have hitherto been learners in the great work, still I think we should be all agreed that our experience has not been fruitless, that steadily from the first we have been moving onwards towards a definite end. I think we may say that our pupilage is over, and that though much has to be learned, much has to be corrected, before our Native Church can be said to be resting on a proper basis; nevertheless, the earnestly desired

hope of our earlier Bishops is becoming a reality, that among the Basuto, the Zulu, and Kafirs proper the little germ of the Church of Christ has been planted, is taking root, and may yet, under God's hand, fill the land.

For our duty to these races is indisputable. Here is our lot cast among them. Year by year we come more and more closely into contact with them. We cannot ignore them. In vain is the cry raised, "Missions do these people no good; better leave them alone." In vain do employers of labour tell us they would rather have the raw material, the unsophisticated Kafir, for it is notorious that they will not and cannot remain unsophisticated. They must come into contact with Europeans. At the gold-fields, in our large towns, every year it is becoming closer and more general; and it requires but little knowledge of the matter to be sure that, if their experience of us is confined to the section of the population which is commonly brought into contact with them, it must be injurious or fatal to the native.

But let alone these things—the drink, and the foul language, and the fouler practices—these, of course, are a terrible comment on our civilisation, and, alas! they are too often the shape in which it is presented to them; they, of course, account for an expression uttered by a Kafir chief when visiting our little town of Umtata. He was asked by my predecessor, Bishop Callaway, "Well, what do you think of Umtata?" "It is a hell, sir!" was the answer. And yet we were no worse than our neighbours. We were unconscious of the extreme depravity which had been revealed in a few days to a heathen chief; a veil was over it to us; there was no veil to him.

But letting this pass, I argue that the state of things which we produce among these people—things which pass as blessings, of which we are justly proud, the natural results of our laws, our mode of government, of the very peace we make—these very things, I do not hesitate to say, if left to themselves, cannot fail to become curses, nay, are becoming curses to these people.

What did we find them when we came among them, these Kafirs of South Africa, whom people compare very illogically to the negroes of America, for they have been reared under totally different conditions? We found their tribes more or less isolated, each with its own chief, who with his councillors, governed the people according to long-established law and precedent, with the right of free speech in the council, that jealously guarded birthright of every man, even the very poorest of the



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nation. We found them as they still are, an agricultural people, who won their subsistence by patient labour from the soil; people who, in times of drought and famine, only too common, had no poor-laws to pauperise them. If the green food ripened in time, they lived another year; if not they died. We found them bound together by clan ties so subtle and yet so close, that each was responsible more or less for the acts of his neighbour, and a theft was, and is still in theory, visited upon the whole community. We found them of necessity ever watchful to resist the encroachments of any enemy; their own right hands had to keep their own lives and their children's.

These are conditions not indeed favourable to the growth of civilisation or of wealth, nor did the constant wars and famines conduce to increase of population; yet under them was bred a people, ignorant indeed and superstitious, and suspicious of strangers, but thrifty, self-reliant, independent, with strongly attached clan and family relations, and with an undying devotion to their chief. There was self-respect and dignity bred in this hard school in which they had been trained, which all who know the race will bear witness to. This was what our Government found them when they passed under British control.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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