

Missionary Intelligence.

Extract from a Speech of the Bishop of Oxford, on the subject of Church Missions, at Reading, on Tuesday evening, Nov. 17. :—

"It is quite impossible to conceive anything more clever, more astute, more exhausting to the powers of the human mind, than the multiplicity of means, touching family life, touching political life, touching civil life, touching the civil law of nations, touching, of course, pre-eminently religious life, than that whole series of expedients, and rites, and arguments, and facts, and arrangements by which Rome had continued to draw to itself, as the only living centre of action and of thought, all the energies of every people that had submitted themselves to her spiritual domination. (Loud applause.) It was very much, indeed, like what you see in the autumn time, when you may perceive a vast, intricate web hanging from the side of one tree down to the shrub below, every one of those single threads conducting to the same central point, and that central point with one single thread from it leading to the place where that cunning insect which has devised the whole sits ready to bring its presence by an almost omnipresent readiness to every part of that great web, so as to seize as its own prey that which comes into any portion of it. (Loud applause.) That is the history of what Rome was. I don't mean to say that there was not those connected with it who were in many respects good. There were. We never do the cause of truth, good by undervaluing the other side. In times of great barbarity—in times when robber chieftains disputed with tyrannous subjects the command of all those Western kingdoms, no doubt there was often a shelter for the poor—a shelter for the oppressed, and a shelter for learning and virtue under this vast colossal ecclesiastical power which had been raised up, and at that time was the only opposite influence to the violence and oppression which had spread itself so widely over the earth. But we are here to deal with one particular point. The effect of this is to show you that Rome had drawn to itself the whole machinery for discharging its great duty on the earth—the evangelising the world. Everything was to go forth from Rome. The whole machinery was there. There was the body which governed every attempt in every part of the world to send out a mission to heathendom. It was the centre of a mighty web. There could not come from the English Church, nor from the French Church, nor from the Belgian Church, any other especial Church—there could not go forth any such efforts, because each one of those who was moved to such efforts was bound to go with those desires to Rome, as the fountain-head, to receive from Rome his mission, and to go forth from Rome. Ay, and remember that the people of Great Britain were just as much possessed by that belief as any other part of the world, that every great appeal went to be settled at Rome, that every earnest man who was desirous to convert the heathen was drawn to Rome, if he was judged worthy of the work, in order that from Rome he might be sent forth. And you will see that the whole machinery was moved from the extremity. It was just like the little finger of a man endeavouring to think for itself whether it should go a journey to Brighton; if it did take such a step, unquestionably it would be crushed and severed from the system. And so would any English Christian if he dreamt at any time of devising such a scheme as this without going back to the great centre; and the only result would have been that he would be cut off from the great system. (A laugh, and applause.) Then, when it pleased God in His infinite mercy to grant that a purer light of a restored faith should rise up in this our land, when our fathers, under the most wonderful leading of the providence of God, shook off that vile yoke which for so long a time had foiled all our religious endeavours, the very lust of one of the most profligate and tyrannous of our monarchs that ever ruled, by God's wise and blessed Providence became the occasion of favouring the true hearty love of a purer faith, which at that time was slumbering in the breasts of thousands of his subjects. The power of the King did no more do it than does the pitchfork you put into some smoking heap which the moment you move it is ready to break into a flame—I say the King no more caused that breaking forth of the purer faith than the pitchfork caused the breaking forth of the flame. The fire had been there sleeping, it is moved, and then it leaps up with its thousand tongues and illuminates the darkness of the sky. It was the pitchfork which moved the mass, and allowed the slumbering fire to declare itself. But mark what followed. There came first of all years of struggle for the new reformed and perfect Church. The fires of Smithfield every now and then broke

out, seeking to destroy the bodies of those who held the truth, and from their fires lighting in the darkness around sprang the purer repetition of the one great bright light of Christ's faith. Then after that there was that mighty revolution in the other direction, and the country was torn asunder by the return to the absolute and lawless form of religion, which resented all fixed faith and fixed morals, and would have wasted itself in the barren assertion of the duty of individuals to be a Church in themselves instead of assembling together under the faith of Christ's word and Christ's teaching. And these great waves rolling upon the strand, first one and then another, in their blackness occupied not only the civil and temporal, but the whole religious mind of this country for generations of men, until they had come clear, as things do come clear, by the settling down of the dregs, and the exhaustive process, by which it had, as it were, cleared itself, as we know things do clear themselves when they ferment, and cast the scum at the top, and the dregs at the bottom, and the good, solid, sound liquor comes out in the midst. (Applause.) And so it was with this people of England. And then it was that they began to look around, and they found this, that they had no mission, no way of teaching the heathen man, that they were spreading the Gospel nowhere. And why? Because, mark you, the machinery was at Rome; they had never been used to do anything for themselves. And so when we were cut off from that old Roman connection, all the missionary labour which hitherto we had been able to use was cut off from us by the same blow which severed us from the corruptions of that greatly superstitious body. And so there was to be formed again for us a Church, a new machinery through which this work of Christ was to be carried out. It was not until about two centuries ago, when this nation had so settled down from all those vast turmoils and difficulties which belong, first of all, to the old superstitious faith, and then to our wrenching ourselves from it at the reformation, that the minds of good people began to turn to the need of this external exertion. And the first beginning of it was among a few pious laymen of the Church of England. I am bound in justice to say that the movement began with the laity rather than with the clergy. One man especially, of noble birth—all honour to him as a philosopher and a Christian—a man ahead of his generation by many degrees—Boyle by name—he was the original suggester of the Christian Knowledge Society, which was the first beginning of any movement in this our reformed land, among any sect or denomination of Christians, for spreading the truth among the heathen people abroad.

"And now let us turn to that part of the world which fills so many hearts at the present time—the great peninsula of India. Men used to talk of it as possessing a population of 150,000,000, but the recent attempts of our Government to estimate the population have shown that we cannot estimate it at less than 180,000,000, and it is very probable to all thoughtful minds that there are 200,000,000 in that great peninsula, Hindostan. I ask you, is not that a field large enough for us? Why, we raise in the Church of England for these two great societies some thing like £200,000 a year. £200,000 a year! and 200,000,000 of people to whom to preach the Gospel. And remember, if the Gospel is to be preached, men must be sent, and they must be supported, and there must be books and means of transit. Therefore, you see our endeavours are, as it were, but a drop in the ocean of our wants, if you take but that one country into account. But you may add to that the who's of Africa, New Zealand, the labours that are requisite among the few remaining North American Indians, and many other places. We have these colonies and dependencies, from which as centres of light, from which as garrisons of faith, there ought to go forth on behalf of England and on behalf of England's Church a message of salvation, and the ministry of the Word converting the heathen to the faith of Christ. Well, then, my friends, here is the great call to support this society, and here is the great field for it to labour in. Its instruments are those of the Church of England, and nothing else. It belongs to no particular colour or view in it. It takes the greatest care that its agents shall be the colour of the Church of England. (Loud applause.) Instead of leaving to any committee, who may represent this or that colour, power of choosing missionaries, it leaves to the two Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishop of London to name from year to year clergymen of the Church of England—to be its missionaries, in order that there may be no possibility of

its giving a sectional or party tone, but that it may represent the Church of England as it is—be it in its strength, or in its weakness, be it as it was of old in its languor, or be it as it is now, thank God, in its awakening strength. (Applause.) It seems to me that it is scarcely necessary to add a word, to show you that it belongs to every Christian member of the Church of England to do something to help us in the Church. And surely if ever there was a time when God himself took up this text and preached to man on earth, it was at this moment—it was with regard to our colonial empire; because you cannot have read those judgments that have come upon us in any other light than this. My friends, if you come to consider that now for one hundred years we have possessed that empire, and we have as yet done very very little for our God—nay, that we have used it as a means of political advancement, that we have used it as a means of gaining wealth for our own land at home, of providing for our own children, of making ourselves great among the people of the earth; and if we were swept off that mighty peninsula to-morrow, we should scarcely leave behind us, in any part of it, a mark or track of our having been a Christian people, that one thing alone condemns us. And if you go into the detail of the history, the condemnation only becomes more signal and black. The one ruling feature of our whole administration in this respect as to doing anything to encourage the faith of Christ or to spread His truth, had been a most un-English timidity. (Loud applause.) More un-English, because whereas in all other respects now we speak our mind, we say, "Let what will come of it, we will speak our minds." (Loud applause.) But we have not spoken our minds about that; we have held our tongues about our being believers in Christ. Nay, I am afraid we have done more. We have been building our might to a very great degree upon the basis of heathenism. We have shown, as I think, unworthily for a Christian nation, respect for many of the very worst forms of heathen idolatry in that land. (Applause.) What do you think of such things as these—of our having sent in the name of the king on the throne cloth from the looms of Leeds to offer as a native offering to the accursed idolatry of Juggernaut on its most solemn day? How could heathen people doubt but that we meant to do honour to that idol? How could we make them believe that Christianity was for them as well as ourselves their better faith when they saw us honouring idolatry in its worst forms? Again, such facts as this—depriving a corporal in the East India Company's service of his rank and putting him out of the regiment because he had been converted to Christianity, one of the best soldiers in that army, one whom most respected, and one whom his heathen fellow-countrymen desired to see continued among them after his conversion; but whom, with an extraordinary timidity, we refused to allow to return, lest any heathen man should be offended at his having become a Christian? What do you say to our so dealing with a noble Christian gentleman, who had gone out to head our troops in one of our Presidencies upon the express condition that he should never be called upon to pay homage to idolatry—I mean Sir Peregrine Maitland? Because he refused to allow the altar of their detestable idol to remain with the troops, or to be longer saluted by them, he was obliged to give up his command and return to England, as though he had committed some dishonourable action, instead of allowing that he had done one which entitled him in its consequences to take his place among Christ's confessors, upon the very margin of the noble army of His martyrs.—(Loud applause.) Here has been our folly, our mistaken conduct. Many of you know something of caste in India, and perhaps some of you do not; therefore, for your information, I will say a few words on the subject. Caste in India is this:—In the first place, it is distinctly a religious difference; that is the basis of it. It assumes as its foundation this first great lie, and a most poisonous one, that God has not made all men of one blood, but that men are in their original difference some made to serve and others made to govern. His lordship went folly into the distinctions observed between the Brahmins and the Sudras, and then proceeded to say—Can you conceive any scheme more vile than that miserable doctrine? The people of India were divided by it. They were led to hate one another as only the evil ones could have led men to dream of hating. Surely you can conceive what our command ought to have been—to throw every discredit we could, consistent with truth and honour, on this miserable distinction. But what did we do? We built on that very caste distinction