

CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN.

MODERN MISSIONS.

IN a preceding article we gave some statistics adapted from the Quarterly Review for July, in regard to mission contributions and the relative proportions of pagan and Christian populations. We made only a passing reference to the mission work of the Church of Rome in the East, where the splendid heroism of its early labourers seemed at one time likely to result in vast accessions to that form of Christianity, but which have left no permanent results beyond a thin varnish laid over the heathenism of the descendants of those baptized by Xavier and his co-workers. In the mission enterprises of Rome there is a unity which contrasts with the efforts of non-romanist bodies, as the solidarity of an army does with all manner of guerilla forces, acting not merely without mutual concert, but often in antagonism. Rome has no mission societies, she makes no fragmentary, detached, sporadic, assaults on the foe, she simply assumes possession of country after country, island after island, continent after continent, maps them out as her own, appoints territorial officials, and from Rome, sends out missionaries of all races and tongues to carry on a systematized propagandism of her adulterated faith, and her long, long roll of martyrs shows with what devotion she inspires her soldiers. The Review we refer to says "the courage and zeal of Roman missionaries are above reproach, and if we cannot help wishing for a purer Christianity than that with which they seem satisfied in converts, we rejoice that the heathen gain by being raised out of their degrading superstitions." Of the great Greek Church, of which we Westerns think and know so little, it is said to be ever aggressive and on the advance in untiring endeavours to encompass and conquer to itself the entire world. Thus we find that all Christendom is now full of mission activity. One of the most interesting features in modern missions is the presence of heroic women labourers. This is an agency introduced as a recognized branch of work by the present generation. They are doing a noble work in schools, hospitals, and private homes where their ministrations are received with gratitude by their benighted sisters. A picture has been drawn of a female mission agent in India. "To the village women the appearance of a female Evangelist must be as it were the vision of an Angel from Heaven. Their hearts seem to realize, faintly, and confusedly, the Beauty of Holiness, when they hold converse with their sweet and loving sister who has come across the sea to comfort and help them. As with a magic wand she lets loose a new foundation of hopes, fears, and desires, as she tells them of their need of the blessed merits of a Saviour." To a woman it was given to be the herald of the Resurrection, to her is being given the glory of heralding the resurrection of the mothers and daughters of India. Another valuable feature in modern missions is the work of medical men whose chief function, as is that of their sister agents, is the presentation

of Christianity in its humanitarian, philanthropic aspect. The sacredness of life is a Christian idea, it however finds in every man an instructive response, so that the hardness of century-long customs, gives way when sick men who are heathens see a hope of health in the attentions of a Christian doctor.

The great problem now before the Church is this, "How can our missionaries be most effectively brought into contact with the people they are sent to evangelise?" Protests have been made in times gone by against the system adopted in various mission fields. But usually those protests were so sarcastic as to be ignored. We have heard such words, and do not wonder that a severe tone was adopted in condemning the folly of using European methods and manners amongst Easterns, as though the very black dress, the white neck tie, and all the conventionalities of clerical life in England were of the very essence of the faith! The gifted principal of Queen's College, Presbyterian though he be, has with his characteristic manly boldness declared that the bald ritual favored by some northern races must be abandoned if we are to win India, whose people love to display religious emotion by music, by processions, and by methods which are by some ill-informed Protestants supposed to be especially Romish. So also those erratic people, the Salvation Army, declare that they have had great success in India, as the Hindoo is delighted with their noisy and sensational displays. It has often been said by us that if we were visited by a Hindoo missionary who retained his native costume, we should have an invincible prejudice against him. So, we believe, the Indian mission field has suffered very seriously from the obstinacy of missionaries in keeping up European dress and manners amongst a people with whom they ought to have become in "all things" like themselves, to win their attention and sympathy; as the Bishop of Durham says, "We must become Indians to the Indians, if we would win India to Christ." There is a great revolution in progress in this respect, not as regards India alone, but all lands, so much so, that those who identify "a bald ritual," as Dr. Grant says, with the Gospel, are likely to be either enlightened or left to cry in the wilderness of neglect.

And there is another grave question. What is to be the future of Christianity in those lands wherein converts are being made by rival churches? The agents of these bodies are alive to the scandal, the hindrance, the danger, arising from introducing the variety of Christian organizations which have sprung up in Europe, among the nations of the east. The missionaries recoil from their own work as planters of Satan's poison weed of sectarianism in God's harvest field. Men like Dr. Christlieb, Dr. Moffat, Sir Bartle Frere, the Bishop of Durham, and the Archbishop of Canterbury have spoken out against the wicked folly of those narrow minded men who attempt to train up converts from heathenism to utter the miserable shibboleths of Eastern sects. From the mission field indeed is coming the most earnest plea for unity, that influence seems promising to

become the special blessing rewarding the mission zeal of this century.

Thankful indeed should we be that the church of our love is likely to provide a common rallying point for all the severed communions. The Review we quoted above, suggests that "Scripture, the Apostle's Creed, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and as at this time of day objections in principle to episcopacy are obsolete, these might be taken as a platform on which the native churches could be brought to join hands. With such a prospect before us, we should rejoicingly aid in the propagation of the Gospel among the people who are now in ignorance, and learn in thus extending our sympathy to prize the inestimable privileges and to fulfil the responsibilities of membership in that Church Catholic into whose sacred enclosure the Master Shepherd is drawing His scattered flocks and His wandering sheep.

EXTREME CONCLUSIONS.

IT is often said that it is unfair to ascribe to any creed or system the faults and evils which it would develop if carried thoroughly out to the logical end of its principles; and therefore objections of this particular kind are apt to be set aside as at once unjust and impractical. The criticism is so far true, that it is unfair to assume that the original advocates of the given system, whatever it be, meditate the genesis of the evils which would naturally flow from an extreme application of its principles, or are even conscious that such results are likely to ensue at all, seeing that they are for the most part too heartily enamoured of their plan or belief to notice its defects for themselves, or to admit them when pointed out by others. And it is further true that very few men are logical in practice—John Stuart Mill himself was conspicuously the reverse—so that they very seldom attempt to be consistent in rigidly working out the conclusions from their premises; and that even when they try to do so, a hundred causes check, modify, or even wreck their schemes; so that it is the rarest of all things to see any system actually doing what might be antecedently predicted as what it must end in doing.

Nevertheless, there is a difference between persons and things. While we have no right to say that A. or B., because he holds such and such opinions, will certainly behave in a given manner, we have every right to say that the opinions themselves are such as to lend themselves readily to the suggestion and encouragement of a certain line of conduct; so that it may be expedient, or even necessary, to counteract them vigorously. Even where a system is not so much inherently unsound in itself as liable to abuse in certain directions, it is very useful to think out to the end what would come of it if unchecked in any such direction, for then we are in a position to devise the restraints and modifications which will safely condition its action.

Let us take an example in illustration. The Lutheran doctrine of Justification was objected to by shrewd theologians when it was first