

In 1803 he was ordained deacon of the church at Ely, acting as curate to his friend Simeon; it was not until shortly before he sailed for India that he was made a priest. His first intention had been to offer himself as a volunteer to the Church Missionary Society, but unforeseen losses of property made it necessary that he should give some thoughts to the support of his unmarried sister and himself. It was about this time that he was offered and accepted a position as chaplain to the troops and civil servants of the East India Company in India.

When the time came for him to leave his beloved sisters and his home land, and to face with his weak frame the trying climate and more trying work in India, the strain nearly prostrated him, but not for an instant did he waver or doubt his call to the work. With resolute face he pressed on to a service which he knew in his heart must shorten his life; yet, he faced it gladly, undertaking it in his Master's name, and for the sake of his fellow men in heathen darkness.

In a remarkably brief time Martyn became able, by his intense application, to speak and write the native language, and his time was fully spent in translating the Scriptures and speaking to the natives, when his duties as chaplain did not demand his attention. But it must be borne in mind that his position was peculiar and exacting, giving him little promise of success. He had been sent out by the East India Co. not to preach to the natives, but to the English people resident there. Besides this he held an office which placed him under the control of the military authorities, and he must work within certain limits, and obey orders as chaplain with the same fidelity and docility as any private soldier in the ranks,—a strictly tied-up condition of service which could scarcely be otherwise than as fetters to a spirit yearning to have free course in proclaiming the Gospel.

Nor was this limitation of service his greatest hindrance. Though thoroughly evangelical himself, he soon found that the professing Christians of his own and some other denominations represented in India, were not generally of like character, and even his brother clergymen put obstacles in his way because he was disturbing them in their false security found in forms and ceremonies.

But the antagonism of others always made Martyn stronger