

Extract of a Letter from Father Anthony Sales, Jesuit Missionary, to one of his order in France.

Viram Patanam, }
Jan. 18, 1841. }

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"Of all the conversions which take place before us not one has been the result of religious discussions, and never has a missionary had less right to boast of the good he has done amongst the idolaters. If we have, for example, to prove the unity of God, we have no need to recur to the reasoning of St. Thomas. *How many Masters, we say, are there in a house?—One only.—And you will have it that there are several Gods in the world!* Such are the arguments which we require.

"Although among the Indians there are some who are not destitute of ingenuity, soundness of reason, and strength of mind, it may, however, be said, that these qualities do not form part of the general character of the nation: The Indians are a people, notwithstanding their boasted ancientness, who have not as yet left the infancy of civilization. They are simple, docile to excess, little susceptible of delicate impressions; but on the other hand, whatever, is capable of exciting the senses, of producing strong, sudden emotions, is quite to their taste. One of our Fathers said in one of his letters, that the peasants of Europe are contemplative in comparison with the Indians. The expression, and the term of comparison, appear to me very just; for, in Europe, a peasant, however uneducated he may be, does not think it necessary that he should cry out a great deal in order that God may hear an agreeable prayer. If he knows how to

read, he peruses his book silently; if not, he recites, without noise, his rosary or some other prayer: he knows that god hears him. Our Indians in practice seem to be far from believing this. When they pray they do so in a loud voice, and as it were singing. Sometimes each one sings his own prayers; more frequently, they all sing together. When they come to particular words which certainly appear to them affecting, they set in motion, at once, all the big and little bells. If, by accident, the persons whose duty it is to ring them, are forgetful, or distracted, they cry out from all sides, "The bell, the bell, ring the bell!" It is all over with prayer if the bell does not ring. Thus in a church manual for the use of the Indians, there might in several places be written in the form of a rubric, "Here the instruments play and the bells ring." Besides the drums and symbols they have usually in the church a great number of bells, weighing from one to four pounds each.—They, moreover, when their means allow it, place an immense bell, not as in Europe, outside the church, where, the sound would be lost without exciting their ears, but in the temple itself. And all these must be put in motion, at the same instant, during prayer. On the ordinary days the music is less complicated: an Indian gives the signal for Mass with a piece of metal, that nearly resembles in form a plate. This plate is pierced with a small hole, through which a cord is passed, which serves to suspend it from one hand, whilst it is struck with the other by a mallet. If one did not see this instrument, one would suppose that it was a bell of four hundred pounds weight.

"In other countries we do not like to see mothers carrying their infants in-