

...of idolatry in the Word of God,—nay, take any description that you can find in any language,—and no language is too strong to express its criminality and its vileness; you can form only an imperfect idea of its abominations. So that it is a positive gain for Christ when any body of persons only cast that away, though they do not actually become converted. It is a great gain for humanity and for civilization that there should be driven out of the world scenes shocking to human nature, and disgusting to the sensitive mind. It is the conviction of the native preachers, that idolatry has no hold on the hearts of the people. The scenes of idolatry are observed from custom. It is common to hear the people say that Christianity is too good, too holy for them, and that the commands are too pure for them to keep them. On preaching in a place for the first time, the native preachers usually commence by reciting and commenting on the Ten Commandments; they then proceed to proclaim the good tidings of the Saviour, who is able to save the uttermost every transgressor. When I asked them how the people received this sort of address, it was replied—and a very singular reply it was—“They approve of the Commandments, but they feel the atonement.”

One day I was going along a muddy flat, across the swamp, feeling that if I slipped I should fall into a deep muddy ditch, when a very active Christian boatman, intercepted me. He said, “Sir, before you sent the gospel we were like the tortoise, creeping in the mud below us, and we knew nothing; we were ignorant altogether of the way of eternal life.” I was much struck by the expression of one native Christian in Barisaul. He said, “Sir, the gospel has come, and we live by Christ Jesus; and now we ought to live to his praise, and to the extension of his glory.” During the seven or eight days we were crossing this district, obliged to take with us every particle of food we required, or to shoot it as we went along, every bit of bread, every article of clothing, and, in fact, all we three persons required for our use and our comfort, to be carried on men's heads or shoulders, or in the little canoes pushed through the mud by men wading to their waist in it,—all this time there was not merely a complaint, but the people came from village to village to meet us; many a time was I hoisted on men's arms, or on their shoulders, to cross the muddy swamps through which we went; and the whole of the labour was done without any farthing remuneration. But I find, six months will fail me to continue those reminiscences of our interesting journeys in that far-off, but beautiful and magnificent land. Our brother Mr. Page has a bi-monthly meeting of all the native preachers, and, on these occasions, they are accustomed to read various parts of Scripture, converse upon them, and receive from the instruction in the Word of God; and it is by these laborious means that they are prepared for carrying out the Word of Life, and presiding over the native communities which they teach. A large number of the native preachers are in a dubious sort of position; many of them act as pastors and as evangelists, while the missionary is still recognised as the true pastor of the people. Gradually, in many places, however, the native brethren are acquiring the power of administering the ordinances of the gospel; and in several districts, though the native churches are not independent, yet they are gradually in this way acquiring the qualities of independence, under the conduct of our native preachers. It may be satisfactory to you to know, that the conduct of the churches under these native brethren is generally wise and prudent. Indeed, in more than one instance, I have found that the native pastor of a church was more strict in his discipline than the missionary was prepared to allow. I remember an incident which will illustrate this fact. It was not altogether an act of discipline, but it will show the way in which they carry forward the interests of their churches. We were down at a place called Luckiantipoor, sitting in our little bungalow with the native preachers, surrounded by members of the church, and various matters connected with the church occupied our attention. There was one man sitting amongst them who was very attentive to all that passed, and attracted my notice by the fineness of his countenance and the intelligence of his eye. I said to him, as soon as I could, “Are you a Christian?” “Yes,” he said, he hoped he was; and, through Mr. Pearce, a conversation ensued, which led both Mr. Pearce and myself to think that he was a truly Christian man. We then turned to the pastor of the church, and we said, “Why is not this man admitted into the church?” He hesitated to tell us. “How long has he been attending the chapel?” “He has been

attending five years.” “Where does he live?” “He lives about three miles off?” “And does he come every Sunday?” “Yes, all the year round; during the rainy seasons as well as the dry seasons that man is never absent.” “And do you think that he is a Christian, a true disciple?” “Well, we think he is.” “Then, why do you not baptize him, and admit him to the church?” This was the explanation. “In the place where that man lives there lives also his father, separated from his wife. That father, one Sunday some time ago, went out fishing—fishing is the great means of livelihood of the people in that district—and obtaining the fish he went to the nearest market and sold it, and with the produce purchased the food for their Sunday's meal. Now, we have reason to believe that man participated in that dinner; therefore it must have been known and approved of by him; therefore we do not admit him to the church.” Of course it is unnecessary for me to say what was right or wrong in this; but it will just prove that these native brethren do exercise a great amount of shrewdness and ability in the administration of the trust committed to their hands. With regard to the Word of God, it is very difficult to trace proofs of its power throughout the country, and some have thought that books were destroyed, and that they had very little influence over the minds of the people. Let me mention one or two facts that will show the contrary. Mr. Leslie told me this fact on the day that I left. He said: “Almost within a stone's throw of my house, I was one day called to visit a man who was dying. I went to his house, which was a shop in the bazaar, and found him near to death. He wished me to read the gospel and to pray with him. I conversed with him, and found that he knew the gospel well. He professed himself to be a Christian, and on further conversation, I learned from his lips, that for eleven years this man, in the secret of his household, in the bosom of his own family, had been daily habituated to read God's Word and to have family prayer; and though this was within one or two stone's-throw of the missionary's house, it had gone on for eleven years, and he did not know it till the man was brought to the very gates of the grave.” There is one thing I would state, in conclusion, and to which I ask your most prayerful and earnest attention. Everywhere we found that the people knew somewhat of the gospel—not enough to lead them to cast away the bonds of superstition and of caste—not sufficient to lead them as sinners to the Saviour's feet, but yet sufficient to enlighten the eyes and to affect the mind. One of the most singular results of preaching has been, that it has not shown its effects yet. The multitudes are so vast that the word is rather diffused than concentrated in any particular spot; and it is because the impossibility of concentration of labour in India that the immediate results are comparatively so few and so little obvious. Could our brethren in India work upon two or three thousand people, as missionaries in the Southern Sea have wrought, or could they gather about them fixed and settled stations, as in the West Indies, we might see more bright and shining results. They cannot do this; they go out and preach, and are listened to by hundreds and thousands: they vanish away, but they carry with them some portion of the truth they hear, and this accounts for that singular diffusion of divine knowledge all through the population, which is not yet enough to affect the daily habit and worship of the people. Now, brethren, this seed is widely scattered; it wants but the rain of heaven to fertilise and cause it to grow; and it is for this rain that the missionaries in India and the missionary societies at home appeal to you for your most earnest and fervent prayer. Do you, then, Christian brethren, go to your homes and pray, earnestly pray, not only for more labourers in this great field, but that the Divine Spirit may descend on what has been sown, and the plant spring up to a ripe and early harvest.

Rev. JOHN GRAHAM spoke to the sentiment: “Christian Missions the Harbinger of Civilisation.”

pieces, that whatever may become of other things, the Word of God shall prosper. “Love and concord in the Church”—a beautiful thing to look at—the reflex influence of all missionary engagements upon the churches that contribute, the churches that sympathise, and the churches that pray. Without detaining you at any length, I may just remark that there is a beautiful analogy between nature and grace. In nature, that healthfulness may be continued, there must be activity. There is that stagnant pool, it only produces noxious life, and contains in its depths the elements of corruption and decay. But go to that gushing, overflowing, glittering fountain, and there is nature in her activity, nature in her healthiness, nature in her beneficence, nature in her grandeur and glory. Then there is another law of nature, that certain elements thereof must come together, must unite. If these drops of water that come down from Heaven's graciousness upon the thirsty earth, repelled one another, instead of, by a beautiful law, uniting with one another, they would produce no sufficient influence upon the face of the earth; but with this property of union or fellowship, they flow into those streamlets that rill through our valleys, and these into those rivers that wind their way to the mighty ocean—that ocean which is the very highway of the nations, and which, instead of severing the countries of the world, does, indeed, unite together the kindreds and the people of all lands. Now, we apply this to the gospel. We apply this to the operations of the missionary society. We apply this to our churches. A church without activity for the spread of the gospel, is just like that stagnant pool. It may profess the highest orthodoxy. Would to God that all our churches, not only professed, but held it firmly, too! There must be activity; and, in order to this activity, there must be union.

DR. STEANE said: It is not on this occasion alone that we have been indebted as a denomination to the great kindness of the Earl of Shaftesbury. He has not only identified himself with us on the ground of our missionary work to-day, but on the ground of religious liberty. He has taken an active part, and yielded most valuable service in the protection we have sought from foreign Governments for our persecuted brethren on the Continent. Dr. Steane related the part taken by his lordship as president of the conference at Hesse Homburg, and concluded by moving:

“That the very cordial and sincere thanks of this assembly be presented to the Right Hon. the Earl of Shaftesbury for his great kindness and courtesy in taking the chair to-day, and in presiding over the proceedings of this meeting.”

The resolution was seconded and carried with acclamation.

LORD SHAFTESBURY: Be assured that I thank you very sincerely, and from the bottom of my heart, for the vote that you have been pleased to pass. But, at the same time, I must say I think very little is due to me for having come here to spend two or three hours, to testify the deep respect and gratitude that I ought to feel, and that I do feel, for such great and blessed efforts in the cause of religion and humanity. There is no enjoyment greater to me, and if I may use the expression, no feeling of pride that I entertain more sincerely, than when I find myself joined with these hearty, respectable, and earnest fellow-citizens of mine in a great work, the issue of which is the glory of God and the welfare of mankind. I hope and trust that it will please Him to allow us to meet again to receive the narrative and records of triumph in the East, and to join together heart and soul in giving Him thanks for the past, and in putting up earnest and deep supplications for the future.

Baptist Irish Society.

The annual meeting of this society was held in Kingsgate-street Chapel, Holborn, the Hon. the Rev. B. W. Noel in the chair. The Chairman said they met under circumstances which might well encourage them in their work. Within his recollection, changes had taken place in Ireland which would altogether forbid the idea of their withdrawing from their labours, and should rather prompt them to greater exertion. Some of these changes had much tended to lessen the exasperation of Irishmen towards Protestants and towards this country. The settlement of the question of Catholic emancipation, the composition of tithes, the giving away of the middle-man system, and the passing of the Encumbered Estates Act, which had given the Irish the means of enjoying more of the comforts of life, had quieted their minds and made them much more likely to listen to the gospel. When he, in company with his friend Mr. Gordon, attended meetings in Ireland from

the London Hibernian Society, some years ago, a very different state of things existed. At Cork, he remembered, they had a regular storm. There were poor Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Sheil, who, whatever else might be said of them, were able men, and he believed had thoroughly at heart the welfare of their country, and were, on the whole, good-tempered men,—at least certainly Mr. O'Connell was; but they gave a very stormy greeting, and a whole host of priests were under their direction. Then, at Waterford, he (Mr. Noel) and Mr. Gordon passed to the meeting through an avenue a quarter of a mile long, of very suspicious-looking gentlemen, all of them armed with what they called the “shillelah,” and seeming quite ready for a vigorous exertion of it. He did not think that any gentleman speaking on behalf of scripture schools would meet with such a reception now.

The Rev. CHARLES STANFORD, of Devizes, said:—The sentiment which I have to submit to you this evening, is as follows:—

“Ireland, the need of Evangelistic effort in behalf of its rural population and of well-directed measures for the establishment of Christian churches in some of its large towns and cities.”

Charity is a principle which has relation to individuals, and not to this or that system of belief. We do love the Roman Catholics; we are here to-night because we love them; we believe them to be as sincere as we are, and that they aim to be right as truly as we do; we would accord to them everything we would claim for ourselves; we only want them to be as free as we are, and as happy as we are. We would argue with them; but would ever keep in mind George Herbert's advice:—“Be calm in arguing, for fierceness makes error a crime—and truth, discourtesy. Why should I blame another man's mistakes more than his sickness or his poverty?” But the system—which frowns on free thought, which prohibits the study of the Scriptures, which deprives the Saviour of his glory by ascribing efficacy to other means of salvation, and which employs the most secret, furtive, lateral, mighty instrumentality the world has ever known in order to carry out its purposes, that, wherever it has given tone to opinion and spirit to law, has shown itself to be a most stupendous insult to Almighty God, and a most unmitigated curse to man; we believe it to be the great curse of Ireland, and the great cause of Ireland's greatest need. We are reminded by the sentiment which has been read to you, that the only effectual antidote to Popery and its desolating effects in Ireland, is evangelical truth. We must take care that we do not attempt to oppose Popery in the spirit of Popery. It cannot be doubted that many who hate Romanism with the zeal of the most ferocious orthodoxy, are aiming, at the same time, to supplant it by a Popery of their own.

The Rev. JOHN ALDIS said:—That the condition of Ireland socially is greatly improved, I take for granted; for I have not been there to see. It is testified in so many ways, and by so many persons, that I have no doubt at all about it. And it is testified without testimony; a large people have ceased to grumble, and the political portion of the community have ceased to employ, as political capital, the misery and the degradation which they had to a large extent produced. Ireland has been presented to our dull Saxon minds very often in an endless variety of forms, and yet we are always brought, whatever the view we take of it, to the same conclusion—turned back to the good gospel, and its kind and glorious Author, and to the spiritual power that can alone make it effective. Why, sometimes Ireland is represented as the gem set in the Western sea, with beautiful soil and matchless verdure, noble rivers, placid lakes, and glorious mountains; but for its beauty to be complete there must be the Rose of Sharon, and for its richness the pearl of great price. And sometimes one has had the vision of Ireland, when the ancient paganism became extinct, when the people were yet free from the yoke of Rome, when the inward feuds and commotions were composed, and, as it was said, too, all venomous reptiles were destroyed; when it was the focal light at once of piety and knowledge; the land at once of colleges and of saints. If it ever were so, the gospel made it—if it is ever to be so, it must be by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes, again, it is presented to us as the land of lavish hospitality, cheerful carelessness, speaking wit, ready eloquence, warm hearts, and bounding mirthfulness; but, to give elevation and sanctity to all these attributes of character, there must be the grace of Jesus; and, with such elements of character, what may not be accomplished when the grace of Jesus is supplied? Sometimes, again, it is represented to us as impulsive, improvident, a thing of brogue and blunders, care-