

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. X. No. 34.

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 23, 1865.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXIX. No. 34.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Abide with me."

"Abide with us for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."—LUKE XXIV. 29.

Abide with me; fast falls the even-tide:
The darkness deepens: Lord, with me abide:
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O, abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day,
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;
Change and decay on all around I see,
O Thou who changest not, abide with me!

I need thy presence every passing hour,
What but thy grace, can fill the tempter's power?
Who but thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through storm and sunshine, O abide with me.

I fear no foe, with thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness;
Where is death's sting? where grave thy victory?
I triumph still, if thou abide with me.

Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks! and earth's cold shadows flee,
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

Religious.

Are Christian Missions a Failure?

BY THE REV. C. CARTER, OF CEYLON.

The question whether Christian Missions to the Heathen are a failure is one which, after seventy years of experience, we should naturally expect a speedy and decisive answer. Missionaries and Missionary Societies reply in the negative, and the various Christian communities, of this and other lands, shew by their support of the work their belief that the Gospel has not been, is not, and cannot be, preached in vain. Christianity is held by its adherents to be so utterly diverse from all other religions, being of an elevating whilst they are of so debasing a tendency, that even the bitterest opponent, if he had any regard to stubborn facts, must admit its beneficial effects amongst any people where it had gained a footing. Whether or no this is the case is a question which has recently been brought into more than usual prominence by the proceedings of a learned body called the "Anthropological Society," which holds its meetings in St. Martin's Place.

It would seem from a report of one of that Society's Meetings published in the *Evening Star*, that Captain Burton, with Messrs. Read, Walker and Harris, having themselves seen the working and effect of Christian Missions in Western Africa, assert those missions not only to be an entire failure but absolutely injurious and demoralizing.

It might be argued *a priori* that Captain Burton's testimony is inadmissible. We deem Christianity beneficial to ourselves, and, therefore, think it might be so to others. Captain Burton being, it is said, a convert to Mahometanism, would effect more by shewing what, of course, we must suppose him to think—that Christianity is a failure and injurious in England. Who the other gentlemen are, the writer is not aware, but, whoever they may be, the charges they make against missionaries and Christianity, as corrupters of the Heathen, are so monstrous and extravagant, that they might well be left unnoticed, being far more likely to injure the accusers than the accused. The statements, however, as to the actual character of the native converts, demand investigation. There are a great number of Europeans, themselves professed Christians, who after spending many years amongst converts from heathenism, and holding intercourse and having dealings with them from day to day, either fear that we have done them little good, or express a decided opinion that we have not, or even assert without blaming either Christian teachers or Christianity, that the converts from heathenism are worse—more immoral and less trustworthy—than the Heathen. If this be so, then those professed Christians, including members of the Anthropological Society too, since they perceive the failure of the efforts which have been made, are bound in the interests of humanity to seek to convert those so-called Christians from the error of their

ways. The statements of Messrs. Burton and Co. do not prove that Christianity is corrupting; but that those wicked Christians have not been converted to God at all; the one grand design of Christianity being thus in their case unaccomplished, though what Christianity does not contemplate but condemns—their conversion to itself as to a system and a name—has been effected. This we might have expected the Anthropological Society to possess sufficient philosophical acumen to perceive.

It has been the lot of the writer to spend more than nine years engaged in mission work in Ceylon, and he can bear testimony that there is a very wide-spread feeling amongst the European community there, that very few of the natives who profess Christianity are sincere in that profession. Judging from what they see of their behaviour, from what they suffer daily through their dishonesty, and from their utter disregard of truth, Europeans come inevitably to the conclusion, that the native Christians are Buddhists or Heathens in heart, and are far more blameworthy, and a more immoral class of persons than their neighbours, who are too honest to profess themselves to be what they are not. It is painful to be obliged to add, that the opinion which Buddhists entertain of native Christians does not generally differ from the above. They even boast of their own superior honesty in refraining from a profession which is manifestly insincere. They will say: "If a man is a Christian let him adhere to Christianity, and act accordingly. We are Buddhists, and not like many in our village who are hypocrites, calling themselves Christians, though they go to worship at our temples and practise all sorts of wickedness besides." To this testimony may be added that of the Protestant Missionaries labouring in the Island, who continually deplore the spread of nominal Christianity, and the fact that thousands of persons—a very considerable proportion, indeed, of the whole population of the Western and South-Western provinces of Ceylon—who have been baptized, are Buddhists in heart and in practice, immoral in their lives, and have their children baptized, or (which is the same thing in Singhalese usage) "made-Christian" without the slightest intention of training them up in Christianity, or exclusively as Christians. One good brother, pained at this state of things, avowed to the writer his intention of refusing for the future to baptize any children except those of persons who were regular attendants at the services on the Lord's day. Pædobaptist missionaries are constantly lamenting these facts, and lay the blame upon the Dutch Government, which in its day, by civil qualifications and disqualifications, by indirect bribing, by smiles and by frowns, induced the leaders of the people, and with them large masses of the people themselves, to submit to baptism; so that it became a disgraceful thing not to have been "made-Christian," and the unbaptized one, forsooth, came to be called to the present day, when any one wishes to revile him, a "bastard."

A fact or two may be given illustrative of this desire, on the part of the natives of the Provinces mentioned to be baptized. A man of considerable influence in his village, came one day, when I was preaching in an adjoining village, and said he should be glad to have his two sons baptized. On inquiring their ages, and learning that they were respectively twelve and fourteen years old, it was hoped they might prove to be at least sincere seekers after truth and salvation, and a day was fixed for the purpose of conversation on the subject. Judge of my disappointment, however, when on conversing with them it was discovered that their minds were quite unenlightened and their hearts unmoved. They were prayerless, and had scarcely any knowledge of the truths of Christianity. When it was asked what were their motives and the reason of their father's wishing them to be baptized, the father confessed it was because baptism was an honorable thing, and that it was not well to enter upon the business of life, or upon marriage, previous to baptism; and he desired me, as his sons were found unfit for baptism, to appoint them some catechism to learn and prayers to say, by which they might qualify themselves for the ordinance. Though stating that such qualifications were not deemed by me of any value for the purpose, he still pertinaciously urged

the baptism of his sons, and offered, on condition of his request being granted, to bring over to Christianity more than forty persons from his village; and as a last resource said: "Well, you baptize them in view of the spiritual things you speak of and let me have the worldly advantage;" and then went away in anger.

It is very common for persons to say, when asked, "We have indeed been made-Christian, but our religion is Buddhism. We are Christians for this life (that is, for worldly advantage), and Buddhists for the next." Great numbers of persons come and request to be baptized, whose only motive is, that they may thereby qualify themselves for Christian marriage, a motive which they try to conceal. But they are generally found willing to forego baptism when informed that they may be married without it. Some, however, fancying the marriage of the unbaptized somewhat undignified, would reply, "No, we must be baptized first; it is not good enough to be married without having been baptized." Many of our missionary brethren, taking their stand upon what seems to them high and holy ground, refuse to marry the unbaptized, and say, "What have we to do with the marriages of the Heathen? It is enough for us to celebrate the marriages of Christians." Now this might be a very proper course were there sufficient safeguards against the admission of unsuitable persons to baptism and the Christian name; but in the absence of anything to deter the unworthy, and in the presence of so many other worldly and improper motives to induce them to take up the Christian name, it does but prove a snare, and helps to swell the number of those who call themselves what they are not. This state of things, it must be observed, exists only amongst what are called the low-country Singhalese; though many of them have migrated, and are migrating into the mountainous region of Ceylon. The Kandians, as the natives of the mountainous region are called, have so many things to deter them from the profession of Christianity, that that profession is confined, we believe, to those who are truly converted to God. Amongst the Kandians, there is neither honour, status, nor profit to be gained at present, but all to lose by the assumption of the Christian name, and the Christians instead of being numbered, as in the low country, by thousands, can hardly be numbered by scores.

The facts of the case, in brief, are these:—There is in Ceylon a large number of natives—more than 150,000—who call themselves Christians, either Roman Catholic or Protestant, the greater part of whom are so manifestly destitute of piety, so untrustworthy, and many of them so addicted to Buddhism, that Europeans who come in contact with them in the daily business of life are inevitably led to conclusions about the character of the converts similar to those of Captain Burton and his friends. Nor is that conclusion materially modified by a fact of another kind, of which, indeed they may be informed by missionaries and their reports, but which few of them are in a position to verify, and which is so overborne by considerations of an opposite kind, that it makes little impression. That fact is this: that in the midst of this great mass of Heathenism and ungodliness labelled *Christian*, there is really a class of persons who give undoubted evidence of being truly converted to God, and whose character and lives honour their profession; and by them Christian missions are redeemed from the charge of failure, and Christianity is proved to be neither debasing nor powerless for good, but the power of God to the elevation, purification, and salvation of those who truly believe, and who alone have the right to be called the sons of God, disciples of Christ, or Christians.

But then this class is comparatively so small that, having no distinctive name to attest or intimate its character, it is to most Europeans lost in the great mass of baptized Heathenism with which it is surrounded, and hardly any testimony will satisfy them of its existence. As an untruthful person is not believed even when he tells the truth, so the piety of the few is discredited through the insincerity of the many. Those who believe in the sincerity of any native Christians are supposed to have a superfluous amount of that charity which believeth all things. The standard by which Europeans judge the native Christians cannot

be condemned as wrong or too high, but it would be well for them to bear in mind that the same standard would both unchristianise, or rob of "the name to live whilst they are dead," most of themselves, and three-fourths of the inhabitants of Britain too. Whilst Europeans thus pass judgment upon native Christians, both native Christians and the professedly Heathen, looking at the vices of Europeans, pass judgment upon them: the former comforting themselves that they are no worse than their betters, and the latter deciding, not that Europeans are not Christians, but that Christianity is no better than their own religion. Is then the general moral and spiritual character of the native Christians in Ceylon to be justified or excused by this retort? Rather, is not mere nominal Christianity both in Ceylon and everywhere else to be utterly condemned?

It is said that "on the Western coast of Africa the pupils at school and adult communicants represent a total native population of Christians of between 60,000 and 70,000," and that, "out of a total population in Sierra Leone of 41,624, only 3,357 remained Pagans, 1,734 were Mahometan, 15,780 were Methodist Christians, and 12,982 were Christians in communion with the Church of England." There can be no reasonable doubt that amongst these communities a state of things exists similar to that found in Ceylon, and so affords Captain Burton and his friends some ground for their manifestly exaggerated statement as to the immoral character of the native converts. It is absurd to suppose that anything can debase the heathen Africans, Hindoos, and South Sea Islanders; Satan himself having long since brought them down to that point below which wickedness in mortal man can no further go. But it is manifest that unless the fountain of their wickedness be dried up by the only possible means—true conversion of the heart to God—it will still send forth such polluted streams, despite the Christian name and some little Christian influence around, as to render them a disgrace to Christianity, and give persons who cannot dive beneath the surface of native society reason to say that Christian Missions are a failure.

The truth is, it is the practice of Infant Baptism which is answerable for these reproaches which have been cast upon mission work. I can find no words sufficiently strong in which to express my sense of the terrible injury which is thus being inflicted upon the world by the admission to the Christian name of those who have no part nor lot in the matter. Is this practice either authorised by Christianity or consistent with truthfulness, which demands that things be called by their right names? The *Word of God* refuses to recognise it. The baptized are there always described as true lovers of God, as having passed from death unto life, as persons who are born of God, and have confided, and do confide, their soul, their all, to Christ, and voluntarily submit to His guidance and discipline. The Bible knows nothing of any other character being eligible for or having a right to the ordinance of baptism, nor does it in any way recognise any other as a believer, saint, disciple, or Christian. If a person baptized at an age when repentance and faith are impossible is what he is said to be, a Christian, then the penitent believer is not a Christian, but something inconceivably superior, and should repudiate the name which classes him with the unbelieving world. Can anything be conceived more calculated to defeat the great object of the Gospel than obliterating the distinction between the believer and the unbeliever, the converted and the unconverted, and admitting persons indiscriminately, either with or without faith, to an ordinance of character and privileges relating to man's eternal destiny? The mischief which this system has already wrought in the world is incalculable, but surely the evil was never more manifest and never presented so terribly appalling an aspect as it does now in heathen lands, where nominally Christian communities have arisen and are arising so little leavened with true piety that Europeans honestly doubt whether our labour has not been in vain, and the Heathen see nothing of that elevated character and holy life which so gloriously distinguished the *Christians* of the early ages from