

The Christian Visitor.

A FAMILY NEWS PAPER: DEVOTED TO RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE

REV. I. E. BILL,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, good will toward Men."

EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

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London Anniversaries.

Our readers will expect a full report of the Anniversary of the English Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. From the commencement this Institution has attracted the attention of the religious world. Being the first upon the list of modern Missions to the heathen, it was regarded by many as a doubtful experiment, and by others, as the wildest presumption. The idea that William Carey "the cobbler" should cherish the thought of planting christianity on the plains of idolatrous India seemed, to most minds, perfectly preposterous. A few only regarded it with favour; but these few were chosen men. Ryland, Hall, and Fuller, were prepared by faith in God to "hold on to the rope" while Carey ventured to descend into that "dark well." Soon the heaven diffused itself widely in christian hearts, and multitudes yielded their adhesion and gave to the infant cause their cordial support. Other denominations followed the example of the Baptists, and suddenly there started into existence a cluster of Missionary organizations to regenerate the world. The first movements of these institutions were as the distant rays of the morning dawn; but now they shine like the brightness of the noon sun, and their purifying rays are penetrating every dark corner of the world. Without further preface we proceed to notice in as concise a form as possible the Anniversary of the

BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

The meeting was held as usual in Exeter Hall, which was well filled—more than usual attendance.

The Earl of Shaftesbury, the Chairman, came upon the platform, accompanied by Sir Morton Peto, the Secretaries, Dr. Steane, Dr. Angus, Mr. Hinton, Dr. Ackworth, and several members of the committee, soon after eleven o'clock, and was received with a cordial welcome from the company.

The Rev. W. H. Betts, of Southwark, gave out the 100th Psalm, and offered prayer.

The Chairman then rose and said: It would ill become him, surrounded as he was by learned and experienced directors, by ministers of the Gospel from the wide and extended field of their operations, and from all parts of the world, to enter into any discussion upon the value and necessity of foreign missions. He hoped they took all those things for granted, and as undeniable. (Hear, hear.) He would, therefore, simply premise enough to show why he was there—why the honour of an invitation to take the chair was extended to him—and why he accepted with gratitude and joy the honour that was proffered. In these remarkable times in which they live, there was nothing more consolatory and more full of hope than the institution of missions to the heathen. Our great and paramount duty, and the immense benefit to themselves, would of itself be a sufficient argument; but they would look at the institution of foreign missions, not only with reference to their duty, and their effect upon the objects of their compassion, but to the happy and beneficial influence which they produce upon the various branches of the church of Christ, its several phases, localities, and denominations. Now, if any one conceived the notion of sending the Gospel to nations that were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, the first thing that he did was to contemplate the vastness of the field before him, and to shrink with terror and dismay from the thought that, single handed, he could produce no effect whatever upon such a mighty mass of created beings. (Hear, hear.) Well, then, he would see that combination was the first step, and if combination in their fallen nature, and in the various difficulties that beset them, was of itself not practicable in all its departments, in all its forms, phases, and conditions; still, at least, they might come to this, that they might agree, wherever they could, to give the right hand of fellowship; they might agree, wherever they could, to desist from controversy and opposition, and join hand in hand for the advancement of that great cause which tended so especially to the glory of God. Here, then, every one—maintaining in all their integrity their distinctive notions as to church government, and subordinate points of faith—would find, upon looking into the revealed Word of God, that there are truths common to the whole human race, of every creed, language, generation, and age, paramount to every other consideration. (Cheers.) And here was the proud distinction between Protestantism and Popery. In Popery they consented—for they have variations quite as much as any other body—but they consented to suppress their variations, and hold only to the one point of common unity—the headship of the Pope. Protestants have their variations, but agreed to suppress them all, accepting as a common point of union the holy headship of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

There were men who, unable to deny the statements made, called them speculations. They did not deny that missions and missionaries have produced any practical results whatever upon the great mass of the heathen world. Now, without travelling over the vast space that had been occupied by this society, let him look only to India, and compare its state then with its state now. Satees were abolished, infanticide was suppressed, many of those cruel and degrading rites that form the hope and joy of the Hindoo population

were now nearly exterminated; pilgrim worship was greatly abated, and there were doubts whether Juggernaut would still remain. (Cheers.) The marriage of the Hindoo widow was permitted, and they find many natives of eminent character themselves foremost in establishing systems of female education. Was there a man of even common sense, who could describe the change to anything else than the operation of missions and the advance of Christianity? (Cheers.) Missions to the heathen were more than ever necessary in the present day. (Hear, hear.) His Lordship continued: In reference to the state of mind; the state of society; the objects, pursuits, and monopolies, the tendencies and passions, that engage so many of the world at the present hour,—something is essentially necessary to call men to a knowledge of what they are, whence they come, what they are doing, and whither they are going. Something is necessary to draw men out of themselves, and from that system in which almost every individual seems now to have got, of making himself a whirlpool, that into his own person, character, and condition, is to be centred all the endeavours of the human race about him. Something must be done to make men feel that every human being in the world has claims upon him; that every created being, in the sight of God, is as good as another; that although there is now a difference in rank, intellect, and property, at the great day of account the blackest and the poorest will stand before Almighty God on the same equality of position as the whitest and the richest. (Loud applause.) Unhappily, it cannot be denied, there is in the present day, from a variety of causes, an immense tendency and desire for the acquisition of wealth: and nobody will tell me that there is a proportionate anxiety in the right expenditure of it. There is an immense increase amongst all classes—and especially among the middle and poorer classes—of social luxury—luxury in everything, so far as I can judge, except the luxury of doing good. (Hear, hear.) His Lordship concluded with a warm appeal for increased support to the Society.

THE REPORT.

The Secretary then read the abstract from the Report. It stated:—"In the lower districts of Bengal where the missionaries labor, omitting Calcutta, there are 61,184 towns and villages, containing a population of 12,988,430 persons, to whom they have done their best to make known the glad tidings of the Gospel. The statistics of the Bengal Baptist Association embrace 29 churches, and to these have been added by baptism, letter, and restoration, 378. They have lost by death, dismissal, and exclusion, 210, giving a clear increase of 168. In these churches there are 1,737 members, 39 boys' schools, with 1,165 pupils, and 16 girls' schools with 269 scholars. There are also 26 Sabbath-schools with nearly 500 in attendance. All these churches have not been equally prosperous—some of them, indeed, are very small—but it is worthy of note, that a very large proportion of the increase is in the district of Barisal, where some native Christians have suffered the bitter persecution, no less than 104 persons having been baptized there during the past year. This important part of their duties has given the Committee much anxiety. During nearly every month of the year the receipts were below those of the previous year, and its income was not more than an average one. Including £2,000 appropriated to India, it amounted to £20,667 14s. 8d.: the expenditure to £20,505 14s. 11d.; leaving a balance of £301 19s. 9d. in the Treasurer's hands. The total income of this year is £21,467 4s. 6d.; the expenditure £22,039 0s. 9d.; leaving a balance of £286 0s. 11d. due to the Treasurer. The present income is exclusive of any Indian funds; the Committee not having carried to account any proceeds of the Mission press, as Mr. Underhill had only time to balance its accounts on the eve of his departure from Calcutta. The increase in the Society's income for the present year is £2,145 2s. 4d."

THE CONTRAST.

John Marshman Esq. in moving the adoption of the report said:—"It is fitting, that, in this 64th anniversary of the Baptist Missionary Society, there should be a comparison instituted between the state and condition of India before the missionary enterprise commenced and the condition which it now exhibits; and that not with any spirit of boastful exultation, but in order to draw from the comparison, the strongest argument for redoubling our efforts for its improvement. (Cheers.) The first reference (continued the speaker) which appears to have been made to the subject of the evangelization of the heathen in the House of Commons was during the Charter discussions of 1792, and it was upon that occasion that an illustrious individual, the sweet tones of whose voice had so frequently been heard upon such occasions as the one on which they were met—he alluded to the late Mr. Wilberforce—(Cheers)—proposed the following resolution:—"That it is the opinion of this House, that it is the peculiar and bounden duty of the Legislature to promote, by all just and prudent means, the interests and happiness of the British dominions in the East; and that, for these ends, such measures ought to be adopted as may gradually tend to their advancement in useful knowledge, and to their religious and moral improvement."

That was the first test which was applied to the Government; and, to the utter surprise of a man who took an interest in the wel-

fare of India, the resolution excited the strongest opposition in the Court of Directors and in the Court of Proprietors. It was then discovered for the first time, that those to whom the management of affairs in the East had been entrusted by Parliament had imbibed the strange notion that nothing would tend so much to damage the British interests of India, and more particularly the interests of the East India Company, than any attempt to introduce either secular or divine knowledge among the people. They had apparently come to the resolution that they would resist every effort that could be made for the improvement of the people, on the ground that the British Government in the East would always be most stable where the people were most ignorant and degraded. The Court of Proprietors met in a frenzy, and deprecated the passing of the resolution of Mr. Wilberforce, drawing up a petition, which was presented to the House of Commons, deprecating in the strongest manner the adoption of the resolution. The debate which was then held in the India House is, perhaps, amongst the most suggestive documents in Indian History. He would just read to them a brief extract from a speech made on that occasion by one of the most influential and important members of the Court of Directors. He said:—"He thanked God, that if the conversion of the natives was the avowed object of the class—as he believed it to be its real though concealed aim—the effecting it would be a matter of impracticability. He was fully convinced that suffering clergymen, under the name of missionaries, or any other name, to overrun India, and penetrate into the interior parts of it, would, in the first instance, be dangerous, and prove utterly destructive to the Company's interests, if not wholly annihilate their power in Hindoostan. That, so far from wishing that they might make converts of 10,000, 50,000, or 100,000 natives of any degree of character, he should lament such a circumstance as the most serious and fatal disaster that could happen." He must trespass on their time by one more extract from the Company's standing Counsel. He said, "that wherever he was he had always had the Company's interest at heart, that one of the leading and most efficient causes of the separation of America from England from the mother country was the founding of colleges and establishing seminaries for education in the different provinces; and sound policy dictated that he should, in the case of India, avoid and steer clear of the rock we had split on in the case of America." (Laughter.)

Now, this was from a printed report, which might be found in the India House, of a debate held there in 1793. The petition of the Court of Directors was presented to the House of Commons; and, strange to say, in that House Mr. Wilberforce's proposal was met with the same spirit of opposition. Mr. Fox, the great leader of the Whig party, said:—"He objected to the whole measure, because he considered all schemes of proselytism wrong in themselves and productive, in most cases, of mischief; and he thought the present age was far too enlightened to think of making proselytes." (Laughter.) Such were the feelings entertained on this subject, and such was the language used, in 1793, just at the time when Dr. Carey was embarking on the vessel to India. Unfortunately, these feelings were strongly reciprocated by the members of the Government out in India. He would only give them one instance of the interference to which the operations of the missionaries were subjected in the year 1806. Sir George Barlow became Governor General of India by the death of Lord Cornwallis. It was in the same year that the Serampore Missionaries had ventured to preach in Calcutta. As soon as information of it reached the Governor-General, Dr. Carey was desired to attend the police; and the magistrate informed him that he was directed by the Governor-General to say, that, as he did not interfere with the prejudices of the natives, so he requested the missionaries would not interfere with them at all. Some explanation was demanded of this step of prohibition; and the magistrate expressed the views of the Government to signify, that they were not to preach to the natives, nor suffer the native converts to preach; that they were not to distribute religious tracts, nor suffer their people to distribute them; they were not to send forth converted natives, or to take any steps for persuading, by conversation or otherwise, the natives to embrace Christianity. At the same time, the magistrates gave the assurance, that they were well satisfied with the character and deportment of the missionaries, and that no complaint had ever been lodged against them. This order, of course, put an end to all the operations of the missionaries in Calcutta; but great interest was taken by Mr. Brown and Mr. Buchanan, and it was modified; but, in the very next year, on the arrival of Lord Minto, and on his assuming the government of India, the same course was announced, the interruption was pursued, and, although the missionaries resisted any foreign jurisdiction whatever over that which the magistrates had no control, they were obliged to submit every tract for revision and censorship to a Government Secretary before it was circulated. It was in the course of that year, 1807, Lord Minto wrote to the Court of Directors, advising them to use still more strenuous efforts than they had yet made to prevent the "surreptitious reports" of missionaries to India. The meeting would be happy to learn, as they perhaps already knew, that that feeling was changed, that pre-

judice had disappeared. The Government of India now recognised the true end for which they existed—that they ruled not for any selfish purpose, but for the welfare and improvement of its inhabitants; and they found that in that work the missionaries were most important and valuable auxiliaries. Let them take an illustration. Some of them might remember that, within the last twelve months, there was an insurrection among the Santals. It was, of course, put down, and tranquillity restored; but the Government considered that when this tribe was disarmed, it was their duty to endeavour to prevent another outbreak, by introducing civilization among them; and they could devise, they thought, no better means of so doing than that of planting missions there—(cheers)—and he might say the whole of the Santal tribes have now been made over by the Government themselves, who had, at the same time, most liberally offered support for schools or anything else in the machinery of civilization.

Such was the contrast presented between the state of things in Bengal in 1856 and 1840. Let them turn now to other parts of India, and see the effect produced on the minds of the natives by the introduction of the just and noble principles of Christianity. The first subject to which he would ask their attention was, the sacrifice of the children at the Saugor. For a long time the natives had been in the habit of going down to the river, and there drowning their children in the pursuit of certain superstitious rites. Lord Wellesley was resolved to put an end to this practice, and he requested Dr. Carey to draw up a report upon the subject—a request which he very willingly acceded to—and, acting on this report, a resolution was at once passed prohibiting the sacrifice of children on the Island of Saugor. Lord Wellesley was so confident of the goodness of the measure, that he sent down a body of Hindoos to prevent the carrying out of the practice in one instance in which he learnt of its intended observance. The practice ceased immediately and it was a remarkable fact, that many years afterwards, when reference was made to this rite, as also to that of female immolation, they were both denied in Calcutta as ever having existed. This brought him to the rite of female immolation, which had been practised from the "golden age" down to the present "iron age;" and to it the natives clung with inconceivable tenacity. This, therefore, was one of those practices, those religious usages, which the Government had not hitherto ventured to touch. The subject was brought forward for the first time, he believed, by Mr. Udley in 1805, in a memorial to Lord Wellesley urging on him the propriety of putting down the practice, but to no effect.—Lord William Bentinck's hands did not put an end to the rite. There was another rite in India, he alluded to the swinging festival, in which a man in a state of frantic devotion, if he might use the term, was hung up by the stomach and swung round amid the shouts of the mob; and even this, although it was popular with all classes, has gradually sunk into disuse, and, in many villages where it once was common, it is hardly known. The greatest curse in India and the greatest source of crime and misery, was the law of Saster, by which the marriage of widows was prohibited. It was gratifying to know that, although no native had ventured himself to violate it, from the social disgrace it would have entailed on him, yet a petition was sent to the Legislative Council, numerous signatures by the natives, unsolicited by the Europeans, asking them to pass an Act relative to this subject. This was done twelve months ago, and since that time they had had the extraordinary spectacle of the marriage of two widows.—

The last point to which he would allude was education—the "rock" on which, according to the East India Company's standing Counsel in 1802, India was to "split." (Laughter.) Since that time they had been going on full sail to that rock, and the bark had not yet "split." (Laughter and cheers.) Nothing could be more interesting than to view the changed feelings of the Government. They now regarded education as one of the prime agencies in the improvement of the Company, and its support one of their paramount duties. (Hear, hear.) The north-west province, which stood in the same relation as Sparta to Athens, had determined to establish female schools, and Mr. Colvin, the Lieutenant-Governor, had determined to try to get the people to support some of them for the education of their own order, and 5,000 had agreed to increase taxation for that object. He thought he had given them examples enough to show the contrast between the two periods. He did not mean to say that all this could be traced directly to missionary efforts; but it was indisputable that, at that period, the Government of India, from a feeling of selfishness, was most strongly opposed to the admission of light, secular or divine, into the country; that the missionaries were the first to venture there to establish schools, print tracts, and, in fact, to do nearly all that had been done in the country. The missionary enterprise might not have the credit of having done these things; but, had it not been for it, he was persuaded they would have had no such report to make.

Mr. E. B. Underhill addressed the meeting on "India as a Mission Field." He entered at very great length into the various incidents of his late visit to the Society's stations, detailing the state, prospects, and progress of the work.

We shall furnish extracts from this speech in a future number.

Correspondence

For the Christian Visitor.

London Correspondence.

MR. EDITOR.—In a letter of ordinary length it is quite impossible to give your readers anything like a full conception of the doings of any one of the leading Societies now holding their Anniversaries in this great Metropolis of Christendom, but I shall so condense as to make the best of the time and space at my disposal. I must refer you to your exchanges for full reports of the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Christian Liberation Society, and the Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, &c., and confine my remarks, in my present letter, to the anniversary of the

BIBLE TRANSLATION SOCIETY.

Your readers are probably aware that this Society was called into existence by the Baptist body in self-defence, as the result of the determination of the British and Foreign Bible Society to exclude from its patronage and support the versions made by the Baptist missionaries in the East, for the reason that these faithful men, in giving the Scriptures to heathen tribes in their vernacular tongue, translated the word baptize, instead of transferring it as was done by our English translators. Strong remonstrances were addressed to the Committee of the Parent Society, entreating them to rescind the restrictive resolution, but all to no purpose; consequently the denomination was compelled by fidelity to truth, and to its representatives in the great mission field of the East, to combine in the support of the faithful translation of every word of God's book.

Some good brethren flattered themselves that after an lapse of some fifteen years, especially as a number of those who were the principal actors in recording the offensive resolution, had passed to their account, that it would be possible either to get it rescinded, or to have it so modified as to remove all just cause of complaint, thereby rendering the continuance of the Bible Translation Society, any longer, unnecessary. A respectful memorial was therefore presented to the Bible Society, asking either specific grants out of the large funds devoted to the East to aid the Baptist translators in their work, or that the restrictive rule which originated the BIBLE TRANSLATION SOCIETY in 1833, should be blotted from the statute book. Instead, however, of granting the prayer of this memorial the original resolution was re-affirmed, and consequently the Baptist translators, shut up, as hitherto, for support to their own denomination.

The London Freeman in remarking upon the action of the Parent Society, says:—"It would be easy to show what an unwarrantable assumption of authority over a translator's conscience is the foundation of this rule. It is not merely a question affecting Baptists, but would have to be argued on much stronger grounds. What set of men have a right to say, of one syllable of the book, which God has given to the nations—'You shall not translate that syllable?' Is this reverence for God's word? We protest against it, because we believe that every word of the divine record is for the use of every language under heaven. We protest against it because we dare not be parties to giving a maimed Bible to men, and we protest against it as Baptists, knowing that the Word which describes the ordinance of Christ's Kingdom has a meaning that can be ascertained, and is, in part, ascertained to the satisfaction of all competent philologists, and claiming that the noble band of translators, who have shed honor on our body, have a right to exercise the gifts God has given them on all God's word, untrammelled by the decrees of any body of men on earth. On behalf of the swarming millions of India we protest against it. There is but one Bengali version in existence, it is ours; there is but one Sanscrit version of the New Testament in existence—it is ours.—THE BIBLE SOCIETY are desirous of flooding India with the Word of God, and they refuse to use these two versions."

At the annual meeting, which was held in Bloomsbury chapel, J. C. Marshman, Esq., in the Chair, this whole question was discussed in a spirit of christian kindness, but with a manifest determination to adhere with inflexible fidelity to the duty of giving God's Book faithfully translated to the heathen millions of India.

The chairman, in an excellent speech remarked:—"When Messrs. Carey and Fuller sat down to organise this infant society, the translation of the Scriptures formed one of the first objects of their solicitude. They were inexperienced in the work, but they were providentially guided to adopt what has since proved to be the soundest policy of missionary enterprise. Their idea was to carry forward three branches of labour. 1. The preaching of the Gospel to the heathen. 2. The establishment of schools. 3. The translation of the Sacred Scriptures into the languages of the East. In 1793, Carey entered upon this work, and in 1833, forty years afterwards, just before his death, he was still found at his desk, revising the last edition of the New Testament in Bengali which he had commenced."

The Baptist mission has, from the beginning, been singularly favoured with a class of men eminently qualified for the work of translation. The mantle of Carey fell upon

Dr. Yates, when he was called to his rest, Dr. Weger and Mr. Lewis were prepared to take up the work where he left it, and to push it forward towards a glorious consummation.

Rev. J. J. Brown, of Birmingham, in a speech of much merit, referring to the responsibility resting upon the society, said:—"The very region where our translators are engaged render it obligatory upon them to render every word with the strictest fidelity. We know with what reverence sacred books are held in the East. Not a jot or tittle of the Jewish Scriptures would be deemed as of little moment by a Hebrew. If a Mahometan were to translate the Koran, every word would be rendered with the most scrupulous care. The Brahmin would not leave in the dark a single utterance of the book which he treats as divine. Is it unreasonable therefore that we, as christians, should be equally scrupulous in giving them the whole word of God? There is a noble moral dignity which cannot fail to encourage our brethren in their work. Every Baptist missionary true to his Master can say, 'Here is the entire word of God, we have kept back nothing, we have concealed nothing.'"

Rev. C. M. Birrell, in a chaste and elegant speech remarked:—"He thought the time had come when it was in the highest degree desirable to shed some light upon the duties and responsibilities of the translators of the word of God—the time when the question ought to be agitated, whether a man occupying that most solemn position, was invested with power to cast away personal responsibility to such an extent as to promise that his translation should be conformed to the English version, or to the opinion of any body of men whatever. He did not, of course, intend any disparagement to our noble English Bible, or to the men who conducted any of our great institutions; but still it must be felt to be a question of great pressure and moment, whether the christian scholar, standing up as a witness before a whole nation, in order to tell them what he found in the original languages of the Holy Scriptures, was not bound to utter his own interpretation of every word, without reference to any existing standard, or to any human opinion."

Dr. Steane gave a lucid exposition of the circumstances connected with the application to the British and Foreign Bible Society, and of the nature of their reply. He said:—"By far the largest Province in British India, was Bengal. In Bengal there were about 120 missionaries, whom the majority were Baptists. If, then, the Word of God was to find its way into the families of that province, it must be mainly through Baptist missionaries, and these missionaries could not, without a violation of principle, give to the inhabitants of Bengal a Word of God, that was not faithfully translated. The Society having again resolved not to assist the men who adhered to the principle of faithful translation as expounded by the Baptist conscience, they were thrown entirely upon their own resources." "But, although," said Dr. Steane, "the controversy between principle and expediency, between error and truth might be long, there could be no question about the issue. He only hoped that since the controversy was to be renewed, it would be conducted in the future, as it had been in the past, and that they would continue to speak the truth in love."

Secretary Underhill, who had just returned from his tour through India, made a telling speech. Speaking of the inconsistency of the action of the British and Foreign Bible Society, said he:—"For a single word they refuse to circulate the Baptist versions and yet they do not hesitate to circulate, on this continent, translations which contain perversions of hundreds of words. In justification of their course they argue that these erroneous versions were the only ones which Roman Catholics would receive; and that they were sufficient to lead men to salvation. Now he would ask was not the Baptist version sufficient to lead men to salvation? It was high time that the proceedings of the Bible Society were placed on a fair basis. Was it not time to ask them for some intelligent principle on which to conduct the proceedings of that great body?"

Rev. Messrs. Brock and Robinson, and Sir S. M. Peto, Bart., in short pithy addresses, fully concurred in the sentiments expressed by the preceding speakers.

It is not for me to attempt to measure the result of this renewal of the translation controversy; but it does not require the spirit of prophecy to perceive that its tendency will be to arouse the Baptist Churches to united and vigorous exertions, in giving the word of God unadulterated and pure to all flesh. This was the doctrine inculcated by Carey, the father of modern missions to the heathen, and God forbid, that his successors in the mighty conflict should prove themselves unfaithful to the trust committed to their care. A. R.

London, May 6th.

For the Christian Visitor.

SPRINGFIELD, May 25, 1857.

DEAR BROTHER:—Permit me for the first time to address to you a few lines. Since the 24th of March, I have been labouring as a missionary in Springfield and the adjoining settlements. On my arrival in these settlements I found many of them destitute of ministers and meetings. I was warmly received, and kindly treated by all the friends. Our first meeting was well attended and I