

SCOTTISH

Missionary Register.

VOL. I.

JUNE, 1820.

NO. VI.

Scottish Missionary Society.

(JAMES INGLIS, Esq. Banker, Edinburgh, Treasurer.)

Miscellaneous.

ORIENTAL TRANSLATIONS OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

Letter from the Rev. William Ward of Serampore, Bengal, to a Friend in Edinburgh, dated 10th May, 1820.

My dear Friend.—You ask me respecting our Translations, wishing to know something of their origin, the way in which they are prepared, and the state to which they have advanced. I suppose, though you do not allege this, that you are induced to make these inquiries in consequence of a very ungenerous and incorrect statement which has recently appeared in this country*.

To this statement, it cannot be supposed that I should attach any importance, or that it can excite any feelings except those of pity for the writer, and his reported informant; but it has led me into a review of circumstances, familiar to my eye, as the gratifying objects of my daily observation for many years, which may prove interesting to you and the other Friends in Britain, who have so long and so liberally aided these undertakings.

It is a remarkable fact, that Hindoosthan will require fifty different versions of the Scriptures, before the wants of its population, One Hundred and Fifty Millions, will have been met. It has often been matter of regret to the writer, that where the affinity is so great between two neighbouring dialects, a separate version of the Scriptures should be necessary; and yet so it is; and so it will remain, till the inhabitants attain to a higher degree of civilization.

In such a state of things, that

my venerable colleague, Dr Carey, should have been preparing, from his youth up, in a state of great obscurity, for the vast work which has devolved upon him, is not more remarkable than cheering to the minds of those who can perceive the shadow of the Divine hand moving along with the astonishing operations of our own times.

At the period of his embarking, and before he left London, in a conversation with him near the Monument, he developed to the Writer, some of his desires respecting translations in the East; and yet, I know that he was not then aware of the magnitude of the work before him. It appears also, by one of his early letters from India, that he did not expect to accomplish much more than the Bengalee version; and had he been able to finish this work only, he would have been, to Twelve Millions of people, a great earthly benefactor; but he wrote, with his own pen, the whole of the five volumes, octavo, in which the Bengalee Bible is comprized; and he was proceeding in the same way with the Singskrit till a severe pain in his side warned him of his danger, and compelled him to make his Pündit his amanuensis. The Singskrit and Bengalee may be called, therefore, the work of Dr Carey's own hand. From these, as the foundation, have all the other versions been produced. Having provided in this manner the Singskrit version, the source of almost all the dialects of India, the Latin of the East, and known to all the learned from one extremity of India to the other, he was ready to

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avail himself of the remarkable circumstances in which Divine Providence had placed him; and to which it is of importance now to allude.

In consequence of some misapprehension respecting our characters and designs, and owing to (as it now appears) an unnecessary alarm respecting the predicted effects of Missionary exertions in India, on the arrival of Dr Marshall, myself and others in a Danish vessel, we were prevented from proceeding to join Dr Carey, who was then in an obscure village in the northern part of Bengal. From this unexpected interruption, we foreboded the most painful results; all hopes of forming a Missionary settlement near the above village were at an end, and nothing now remained but that Dr Carey should leave his beloved privacy and join us at Serampore. This, however, which then appeared to us "a frowning Providence," was the cloud big with mercy, that mercy which has refreshed us during the last twenty years. Had the seat of the Mission not been thus removed, the Professorship in the College—the English Schools—and the Printing press, as means of large pecuniary help, would not have been obtained. Thus that which appeared to threaten the extinction of our Mission, was the very source of its prosperity: for this removal led to the appointment of my beloved colleague to the Professorship in the College of Fort-William; and this appointment put him in possession, so far as it was necessary to his plans, of all the learning of India. Learned men from every part crowded to Calcutta, seeking employment in this new College; and the senior Singskrit Pündit in the College, who attended Dr Carey constantly in the discharge of his College duties, informed him from time to

time of the arrival of some learned native, now from Benares, then from Cashmere, then from the Punjab; and thus in succession, from the different provinces of India, who were of course introduced to Dr Carey. The Doctor here saw all India coming to pour its treasures at his feet; nor could he be so blind as not to recognize the hand, which thus brought him help from afar.

In that spirit of faith which has distinguished his Missionary life, he engaged these learned men as fast they were brought, and put the Singskrit Bible, as the original, from which they were to translate, into the hands of each. Each Pündit, thus furnished, and instructed also in the nature of the work of Translation, now sat down, and began to render the Divine Word into his native dialect. He was assisted for some time by hints and directions from two learned Hindoos, prepared by Dr Carey, and familiarised to the work of Translation, by having read the proofs of the Singskrit and Bengalee with the Doctor; and then from day to day he was able to go on alone with his work. At an early period, his first attempts were brought to the test, for after he had advanced some way, his manuscript was put to press, and the first sheet was examined by one of the initiated native assistants, sitting by the side of this original native Translator. The first and second proofs were thus corrected, which brought the sheet as near as they could bring it to the original Singskrit. The third proof was then carried to Dr Carey, by the translator himself, and they went over it together, and over as many more proofs of the same sheet as the Doctor thought necessary, sometimes more and sometimes less; and after this the sheet was ordered to press. This has been the constant and only

* The statement to which Mr Ward here refers, appeared in the *Christian Remembrancer* for last month.

process in these Translations from the beginning. How ungenerous then, how unchristian the statement, to which I have alluded in the commencement of this Letter, every syllable of which is as destitute of truth as the Arabian Nights.

As a further proof of the accuracy of these translations, it may be observed, that the Singskrit, the Bengalee, and the Hindee, are known all around us; that our most intimate acquaintance, as well as our native converts, and the Missionaries raised up in India, who are scattered all over Bengal and Hindoosthan, use these books, expound from them, and have thus been proving their accuracy for more than a dozen years. Whatever they may be, therefore, we cannot be ignorant respecting the general accuracy of these versions; and, though we are perfectly aware that they will be improved in every new version, as all the *European* versions have been, yet, if honest and candid, we court the severest scrutiny; as a proof of which, we have invited criticism by a public advertisement circulated throughout India.

It should be further considered, that in languages, the construction, idiom, and genius of which, are so diametrically opposite to those of Europe, no European can be a first and correct translator without the constant presence of a learned Native, for the purpose of reference and particular examination into idiom and construction. He may improve renderings, and secure the sense of the Greek and Hebrew, but the nerve and the elegance of the version must be native.

* In justice to Mr Ward, the language of Dr Carey published in this country more than ten years ago should be quoted—"Whatever helps are used," says the Dr, "I commit my judgment to none of them. Mr Marham does the same with the Chinese, and all that he engages in: and so does Mr Ward" and again, "Whatever assistance is derived from learned natives, not a single word, nor a single mode of construction is allowed to pass without full examination."

In order to form a proper estimate of the ability of Dr Carey for perfecting the work of the Native Translator, it must be recollected that these are dialects of the Singskrit, a language in which he has already translated the whole Bible, as well as the Ramayun, which will make six or seven quarto volumes; that he has published a Singskrit grammar, containing more than 1000 quarto pages;—that there is a similarity so striking between some of these dialects, that nothing renders separate versions necessary but the confined nature of education among the numerous inhabitants of these districts, and that of some of these dialects Dr Carey has written grammars, their first grammars, viz. the Bengalee, the Pünjabee, the Ooriyü, the Telingü, the Kurnata, &c.*

It now remains only that I should give you an idea of the state of PROGRESS in which these translations were when I left Serampore. At that time there had been translated, printed, and published—

The whole of the Old and New Testaments in the Singskrit, the Bengalee, the Marhatta, the Hindee, and the Ooriyü languages.—

The New Testaments in the Künkün, the Püshtoo, the Telinga, the Pünjabee, the Assam, the Kurnata, the Güzuratee, and the Chinese. In the Pünjabee and the Chinese considerable progress had also been made in printing the Old Testaments.

Several other versions were also in the press when I left India; and there are now sixteen presses at work daily in the Serampore printing office, mostly employed on new versions or new editions of the Scriptures.

"Ah! my dear friend, how do I wish that you could have been present when the Marquis and Marchioness of Hastings, the Bishop of Calcutta, &c. did us the honour of visiting the establishment at Serampore; present, when they entered the room, in which about thirty learned Hindoos were sitting in silence, and translating the Sacred Writings each in his own tongue; present, when they all arose to receive their distinguished visitors, and when Dr Carey presented to the Governor-General of India, and to the learned Bishop, these translators of the Holy Scriptures, one by one, from Afghanistan, from Güzurat, from Cashmere, from Telinga, from Népal, from Assam, from China, &c. &c. &c."

But we have a still higher gratification in these translations. To say nothing of six or eight individuals, resident in the village of Ramkrishnupore, who, in consequence of reading one copy of the Bengalee New Testament, and without the intervention of any living teacher, were led to renounce heathenism, and embrace the Christian faith, the same Translation was the means of conversion to two very respectable Hindoos of the writer cast: one of them is now employed in the Court of Justice, under the Dutch government at Chinsurah, and the other is one of our best Hindoo poets, the greater part of the Hymns in our Bengalee hymn book being his composition. He has also written an able defence of Christianity, which has been printed, contrasting the heathen tenets in which he was educated, with the glorious doctrines of the Gospel.

The Bengalee Scriptures have also begun to diffuse a very great portion of divine knowledge around the capital of India; they have become a sacred light in the families, and to the feet of many a benighted

heathen; they have supported others in a state of sickness, and enabled others to meet their last change with holy resignation, yea, with sacred triumph. Such have been the effects of the Serampore translations where they have been most read.

But not only have the *Translations* been attacked: the following quotation is given in the last Monthly Magazine, from one of Dr Bryce's Sermons, by which it appears, that he wishes to insinuate, that no conversions deserving of the name have been made in India: "The Rev. James Bryce, in a sermon preached in Calcutta, March 1818, said, "Zeal the most active and disinterested, and diligence the most assiduous, have not been spared by the Christian Missionary in his pious attempts to convert the natives of India. But, Alas! it may be doubted, if at this day he boasts a single proselyte to his creed over whom he is warranted to rejoice, &c."

This gentleman did not know; but, living only fourteen miles from Serampore, he might have known, had he wished for the information, that the persons connected with the Serampore Mission have baptized between Six and Seven Hundred Hindoo Pagans and Mahometans; that there is a Christian Church of 150 Aracanese, in and round Chittagong, speaking the Burman language, and reading that part of the Burman New Testament which is already published, who have been converted to the Christian faith; that in Jessore there is another Church of Converted Hindoos and Mahometans, consisting of nearly 100 members; that at Cutwa, another Church, amounting to about the same number of Hindoo and Mahometan converts, exists; that in Dinajepore, a similar Church exists, of more than a hundred members; and that, at Serampore and

Calcutta, there are nearly 200 Christian Hindoos and Mahometan converts; in short, that, in Hindoostan and Bengal, this Mission has nearly Twenty Churches of Christian natives. Is there not one individual, then, in all these, over whom the Christian Missionary is warranted to rejoice?

A converted Hindoo of the writer's cast, Pitambur-sing, died some years ago, who preached the Christian faith. He even defended it ably by his pen, and expired quoting the words of the Bible as the foundation of that composure and confidence which were most conspicuous in his Christian death. He frequently observed, that he had obtained "the peace which Paul wished, in the introduction to his Epistles,"—and are we not warranted to rejoice over the memory of such a convert?

Krishnoo Prasad the first Bramhun who was baptized in Bengal, died also a few years ago. He was most exemplary in his life, sought to bring his wealthy relations to the faith, and died full of hope, leaving behind him a name embalmed in the memory of all his brethren.

Some time after him died Futick, a Hindoo, who carried the gospel, in the face of the most threatening danger, to his native village. The villagers seized him, and stopping up his eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth, with mud, drove him from their village. This convert, when he came to die, called around him his brethren, and begged them to sing a hymn. While they were singing, his soul departed, borne as it were to its eternal rest, on the chorus of this hymn: "Eternal salvation through the death of Christ."

Rugbooo, another converted Hindoo, was visited by myself in his last moments. This poor man had been swung with hooks thrust

through the flesh of his back at six different times. I counted this number of scars which the hooks had left. As long as this native was able to speak plainly, he expressed his firm hope in the death of Christ, and at last, just as he was leaving the world, fixing his eyes on me, and laying his hand on his heart, he said (speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ).—"He is here—He is Here— I feel that he is here."

Krishnoo the first Indian convert, has stood the test of twenty years, and still adorns his Christian profession. A young man, Gorachund was seized by his relations, who were about to carry him from Serampore by force. He appealed to the Danish Magistrate, who put it to his choice, and before this Magistrate, and in the presence of his heathen mother, he declared he would be a Christian;—he is now a Christian teacher. Ram-mohun, a converted Bramhun of the highest cast, and who, when a heathen, set fire to the pile in which his living mother was consumed to ashes, has been the means of the conversion of several persons, and he is now such a persuasive preacher of the Gospel, that I have seen his congregation drenched in tears. Nay, what is more, when I was leaving Serampore, there were then waiting for baptism five persons, who had been converted by the ministry of another Hindoo preacher, Seluk-Ram. Over such converts as these, are we not warranted to rejoice? Would to God that we had more such, and that Dr Bryce, might have many such, to be "his joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus."—

I am, &c.

THE following HYMN will be read with interest, as exhibiting a pleasing view of the mental culture and Christian feeling of Krishnoo, the first Hindoo Bap-

—*tist* Convert. It was written by him, and translated (we believe) by Mr Ward.

O thou, my soul, forget no more
The Friend who all thy mis'ry bore;
Let every idol be forgot,
But O, my soul, forget Him not!
Brumhu* for thee a body takes,
Thy guilt assumes, thy fetters breaks,
Discharging all thy dreadful debt;
And canst thou e'er such love forget!
Renounce thy works and ways with grief,
And fly to this most sure relief:
Nor him forget who left his throne,
And for thy life gave up his own.
Infinite truth and mercy shine
In him, and he himself is thine;
And canst thou then, with sin beset,
Such charms, such matchless charms fol-
get!
Ah, no! till life itself depart,
His name shall cheer and warm my heart;
And lisp'ng this, from earth I'll rise,
And join the chorus of the skies.
Ah, no! when all things else expire,
And perish in the general fire,
This name all others shall survive,
And through eternity shall live.

* Brumhu is the Hindoo name for the One God.

† Nearly half the total number.