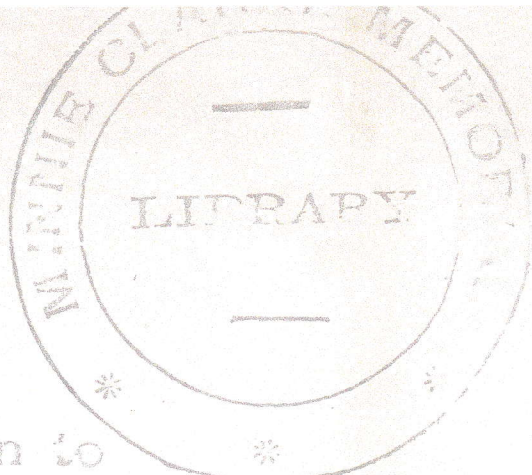


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MRS. S. E. ...
...

INTRODUCTION

THIS brightly written account of one of the most interesting and prosperous Missions in India needs no introduction for the benefit of those for whom it is principally intended—the members of the Congregations, Associations, Branches, and Guilds scattered throughout the country, who are already acquainted with the work, who perhaps already support it with their contributions, or have helped to send out some of the workers, and whose warmer interest and more active assistance will be called out by a perusal of this vivid narrative. But for the sake of those who hear of the Mission now for the first time, and who may be tempted to think that a Missionary's own account may be coloured, perhaps unconsciously, by too

favourable prepossessions, it has been thought advisable that one who has held an authoritative position in the country and has seen the working of the Mission from outside should give his official testimony to the truth of Mr. Graham's description.

During the five years that I was Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal I spent a portion of each summer at Darjeeling, and no year passed in which I did not pay a visit to Kalimpong. I saw it first in 1891, when the church described in Chapter V. had not been completed, and the cemetery had only just been walled round. I saw it again when the tower of the church had been finished, and stood up a bright, conspicuous landmark visible from many miles around, as a lamp which shall not be extinguished till all the surrounding country is brought to the knowledge of our Lord and to faith in Him. I watched the growth of the little village chapels scattered about the hillsides, each gathering its little congregation under its wing. I visited, on the last occasion I was there, the well-arranged and admirably

equipped Hospital under Dr. Ponder, where medical science is used to attract people to the news of salvation, and the cure of the body is made the forerunner of the cure of the soul. In the course of these years I became fairly intimate with the Missionary body and with some of the native Christians. I knew their difficulties and discouragements as well as their joys and successes, and I can bear witness without hesitation to the accuracy of the picture drawn by Mr. Graham, and to the blessing which has rested on the Mission at Kalimpong.

To take the lowest argument first, the assistance given by this Mission to the work of civilisation and good administration has been considerable. It has been the agent of the Government, as mentioned in Chapter VII., in the spread of education in this part of the country, in which some forty or fifty village schools are established, under the care of the Missionaries and manned by their staff. It has co-operated with the District officer in keeping order in the village and in putting down drunkenness, gambling,

and other vices. It offers to all the neighbouring population an example of the beauty of a Christian domestic life, and of the proper position which women should take in that life.

Turning to the more definitely religious side, the Missionaries have been unusually successful in converting the simple tribes from their animistic or Buddhistic beliefs to the Christian faith. Of the quality of the Christians Mr. Graham speaks with complete candour; there are men and women of all sorts—some weak and doubtful, some of distinguished purity of life and character. One such, who is not mentioned in these pages, I knew well—he was the first convert made by the Scotch Mission in Darjeeling, and is now filling the high post of Inspector of Police. In that office a man is open to much temptation to misuse his power, but no such charge was ever made against Bhim Dal. He constantly accompanied me in my tours in the hills, where his knowledge of botany and of bird and beast life was very instructive, and it

was a real pleasure on Sundays to be able to call him in to join our family worship.

The Church of Kalimpong is remarkable for possessing three distinctive notes of true Christianity. One is the extent to which its affairs are managed by its own Panchayat, or Presbytery, for the Missionaries wisely foster the spirit of self-government, and do not seek to rule their flock as autocrats. The second is the self-supporting character of the branches established in the various villages, which not only build their own churches but also partially pay for their own pastors, not looking for help to headquarters. The third is the missionary spirit which has led them to make the effort to proselytise in Bhutan narrated in Chapter XII.

The three closed countries, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, into which no European (whether missionary or of other occupation) is allowed to enter, lie round Kalimpong, and it is natural that the Missionaries should gaze at them with longing eyes. The time no doubt will come when the door will be thrown open, but, for the present, Government

is compelled to refuse sanction to any attempt to cross the border, however much it may sympathise with the object. Meanwhile there is scope for all enterprise in the valleys and on the hillsides of Darjeeling and of Sikkim, and a band of men is being trained there in the language, the thoughts, and the ways of hill tribes, and is thus acquiring knowledge which will stand them in good stead whenever the door shall be unbarred and the light of Christianity admitted into those countries where now no white man is able to penetrate.

C. A. ELLIOTT.

13th March 1897.