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Serampore and its College.

SERAMPORE in the eighteenth century was "a populous, well-ordered, healthful, and beautiful town," on a river as broad as the Thames at Gravesend, a hundred miles from the Bay of Bengal. Every tide saw some two hundred boats sailing up, while capacious wharves accommodated ships from Denmark and other parts.

The province of Bengal, nominally subject to the great Mogul at Delhi, had long been governed by hereditary viceroys, living at Moorshedabad. They had leased land on the Hooghley to various trading companies, which had created new settlements. The Dutch were at Chinsurah, the Danes at Serampore, the English at Fort William, the French at Chandernagore, the Portuguese at Bandel. But Clive's victory at Plassey gravely altered the situation. In a short time he personally became the owner of all the land leased out to the English; he attacked a Dutch fleet and made it clear that Chinsurah was a mere trading station; he captured Chandernagore. By 1766 the English East India Company bought from the great Mogul the right to collect and administer the revenues of Bengal, Behar and Orissa.

Thus the Danes at Serampore found themselves engulfed in what was to all real purposes British territory. Opposite to them arose a military station, Barrackpore, where the British Governor-General spent his week-ends. Yet they continued to carry on a good trade, and to manage their little settlement as independently as the ambassador from the United States manages his house in Grosvenor Gardens.

Now the Danes were pioneers in Protestant mission work. King Frederick IV sent to his other trading station at Tranquebar, two Germans from Halle as early as 1705. Within ten years Ziegenbalg published the New Testament in Tamil, and completed the Bible by 1727. A Swede, Kiernander, broke ground on the Hooghley, but worked in the English and the Portuguese settlements, among the Eurasians.

Zinzendorf, the Moravian leader, who had planned so much mission work, directed attention to Bengal. So in 1777 two men came up the Hooghley, one a doctor, one a son of a bishop who had done good work in Greenland, Holland, Denmark, and Germany. Serampore became their home for fifteen years, in which time they made some lexical preparation for translation. Governor Bie had scarcely any resident Christians, and some of them were Greek, Roman, Armenian. The Moravians did

not conceive their work to lie among the motley crowd of traders and sailors, and the only native who seemed interested was one of their carpenters, Krishna Pal. So in 1792 the mission flag was hauled down in Serampore.

But in that year a band of Englishmen decided to follow, not merely the example of the Danes, the Germans, the Swedes, the Moravians, but the command which had inspired them. And in 1799 four families arrived in an American ship, with letters from the Danish consul in London commending them to Colonel Bie. As it soon appeared that the English resented their object and even their presence, the Danish governor offered them the privileges of citizenship, which would entitle them both to residence there and to passports into the English territory; he further suggested that they might establish good schools and a printing-press, wherewith to finance themselves. To the chagrin of the English authorities, his offers were accepted, and Serampore, after eight years' interval, became again a missionary centre, where, in a year, Krishna Pal was baptized, first of North India.

Joshua Marshman, one of the new arrivals, had been master of the Broadmead school at Bristol, with private pupils, and had studied languages under Dr. Ryland. Before the century closed, he opened a school for natives, and soon followed with others for Eurasians and Europeans; within eighteen years there were nearly fifty schools for natives within twenty miles. What was done by Carey as a translator, by Ward as a printer, by Marshman as a philanthropist and journalist, is well known. We think now of the development of education. Marshman became intimate with Martyn, a Senior Wrangler, and learned something of English university methods. The success of their village schools led to a demand from parents that higher education should be afforded. So in 1818 the trio published their prospectus of a college to teach Eastern Literature and European Science. They deliberately decided to teach in the vernacular, and while they plainly showed that the spirit of Christianity should rule, yet they had a conscience clause. So good were their plans that the English Governor-general became Patron, and the Danish Governor became Governor of the college. By degrees they built out of their own earnings a fine Ionic pile, hardly altered to-day. The King of Denmark soon gave more premises, now used as a hostel. And within three years arrived the inevitable Scotch professor, John Mack. In 1827 the King set his seal on the undertaking by giving a charter with powers as ample as those in the university of Copenhagen.

During the Napoleonic wars, Serampore had been seized by the English, and its trade never recovered, so that the King sold

it and Tranquebar to the English in 1845. But in the treaty it was expressly stipulated that the charter should hold. And thus for a hundred years the power of granting degrees has been held, Serampore the first such college in Asia. University classes continued till 1883, despite repeated doubts in England as to the value of such work from a missionary standpoint. Then for a score of years all work was concentrated on training evangelists, preachers and teachers.

Early this century the Government decided not to institute a Faculty of Theology in any of the state universities. The Missionary conference of 1902 therefore began to explore the possibilities of working under the Serampore charter. Work began again in 1910, and eight years later a Senate was constituted with representatives of several communions:—Anglican, Baptist, Congregationalist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian and Syrian. What success has attended this revived enterprise was told then by members of the staff. And now that account is already out of date. A revised edition of "The story of Serampore and its College" has been prepared, partly by other writers; and the Orissa Press shows that it is as ready as the Calcutta Press to carry on the traditions of Ward. The book is well worth reading.

W. T. WHITLEY:

Report of the Baptist Historical Society for 1927.

THE Society has now completed twenty years' work, and has fulfilled some early hopes, though greater possibilities are evident. It has built up a reputation as a clearing-house for information: churches preparing centenary or bicentenary memorials send their queries, and occasionally their memorial publications; even from America enquiries arrive, often on biographical points. Within six years we shall expect a London church to put out some Memorial to celebrate its three-hundredth anniversary; perhaps it will invite the Society to hold the Annual Meeting then out at Walthamstow.

Not only information, but the published records, are also interchanged through us. The church at Lockwood offered a large number of bound magazines and Hanserd Knollys volumes. We were thus enabled to return the kindness of the American