

Missions and Contemporary Literature.

BY THE REV. C. HALDON.

"LITERATURE is essentially a social phenomenon," says Mr. A. S. Mackenzie, in his "Evolution of Literature," and one naturally asks why it is that the modern author is so frequently oblivious to the social effects of the missionary enterprise. Mr. Bernard Shaw will tell us with a fine disdain of facts that evolution has destroyed what he calls "Garden-of-Edenism," and the very thing that he brushes contemptuously aside has worked some of the most mighty social reforms of any age. Or we find Sir George Scott writing on Burma, and quite ignoring the existence of the Society for Propagating the Gospel! One asks whether missionary effort has come to such a diminished point that it eludes the observation. The contrary is the case. When Southey wrote his famous defence of missions, the incomes of all Societies were barely £50,000. To-day they are about £4,000,000.

In the region of *belles-lettres* it is surely pardonable to expect that the missionary's contribution to human progress should find proper recognition. Now, take these two quotations and remember they are highly characteristic.

In the Prologue to "The Life Everlasting," Miss Corelli says: "All the world over there are religions of various kinds, more or less suited to the various types and races of humanity." Again, in "Conflict of Colour" (p. 118), Mr. Putnam Weale says: "Christianity, no matter what ardent evangelists may say to the contrary, can only really live and thrive in temperate climes; as it stands to-day it is the product of temperate climes, and only of temperate climes;" Western people, he says, will be always Christian, and Easterns will be always non-Christian. No spiritual conception can make economic or racial changes.

I am tempted to examine these statements because, as I say, they are so characteristic of literature to-day. Has Miss Corelli ever heard of a case like this? A missionary in Nigeria found a newborn baby in the bush, cast out to perish because, although perfectly healthy, its birth was not entirely natural. He finds the mother, and insists on her nursing the child. She does so, and her natural affection returns; but the poor missionary has broken through their *Ju-ju*, and he is ostracized. The people will not come to him even for drugs. Miss Corelli may say that this is an extreme case among a barbarous people. Very well. She will hardly call the people of Madras a barbarous nation. Is she aware that in Hindu temples the dancing-girls have become so degraded that local officials are compelled to take steps in the matter, and that the Secretary for India has sent a special despatch on the subject? These cases are not merely the sins of heathen peoples, but they are the direct outcome of religions which Miss Corelli says are "more or less suited" to the people who believe them.

Mr. Putnam Weale, on the other hand, goes deeper, and attacks the principle of the work. It is a bold position, and one which is rarely taken, even by opponents of missionary methods. It is a strange thing that he says, "Christianity is the product of temperate climes." The question is, What is Christianity? A man may go into a Roman Catholic Church and see a great deal that he objects to, but what he sees is not Christianity, but the Roman Catholic conception of Christianity. The truth that I imagine our author has to learn is that Christianity is not a creed, or a church, or a moral code, but a life—a life whose principles and conditions are to be found in the pages of the four Gospels. The Apostles were ordered to preach this life. Under varying similes the order was given, sometimes, "the Kingdom of God," or "the Word," or "the Gospel"—terms expressive of different aspects, but always based on the fundamental conception of Christianity as a life to be received, to be learnt, and to be lived. To say that we have superadded our Western notions to this primary conception, and that

therefore we are incapable of presenting it to the East, is very much like saying that no Englishman can teach the natives of Nigeria unless he divests himself of his clothes! We then find Mr. Putnam Weale among the prophets. The West, he says, is naturally Christian, and the East will remain otherwise. No amount of spiritual teaching, he assures us, can overcome the barrier of race. It is a comfort to know that, as Europeans, we are safe from the inroads of paganism, but our comfort is a little disturbed by the facts of history. It is not the case that a nation once Christian is always Christian. The first country in Europe to embrace Christianity is now Moslem, and the once Christian Temple of San Sofia is crowned with the Crescent. It is estimated that South-East Europe contains nearly four millions of Mohammedans. Spain was for centuries a Mohammedan country, and so was South Italy. Then, as regards Christianity making headway with people of another colour, and across the border-line of race, Mr. Weale cannot surely be serious when he asserts that such a thing is impossible. We grant that the conquest of the Cross has not been universal, and that often it is slow in its working; but this is because Christians have failed, and not the Christian message. Seventy years ago the Church Missionary Society went to Yoruba, in Africa. What did they find? They found the people in the lowest state of degradation. What has happened in that seventy years? Human sacrifices have been abolished; slavery has become illegal; inter-tribal wars have been stopped; new industries have been started; thousands upon thousands have been gathered into the Christian Church; about fifty natives have been ordained, and four have been made bishops. This is the record of one country, but it is true of others. The names of Madagascar, North-West Canada, Melanesia, Fuh-Kien, and Ceylon, will occur to anyone who has made even elementary acquaintance with the story of missions abroad. The worker for missions has no reason to be ashamed of the story, but he has reason to be ashamed of a Christian country that spends two hundred times more on its sports than on its

missions, and that produces works of literature which decry the most humanizing efforts of the twentieth century.

Mr. Wells takes a much more intelligent view of missions than many of his contemporaries. He is quite ready to discount adverse judgments as to the supposed insuperable barrier of race.¹ He agrees with his friend the botanist that races are not universally inferior, and argues that you can no more take an individual Eastern as a type of his kind than you can judge England by a drunken cab-tout. I am afraid, however, that some of his remarks in the book I am quoting fully justify his own description of it in the "Note to the Reader" as "imaginative writing." I refer especially to the chapter in "Race in Utopia." Here is an example: "Both Christendom and Islam are indeed on their secular sides imperfect realizations of a Utopian World-State." He means that both are able to exist among people of different language, but I venture to say that it is an intolerable abuse of words to class them together even on the secular side. The fact is that Christianity and Islam are the only missionary religions in existence. The success of Islam is due partly to its missionary character, and partly to the elements of truth it contains, as Carlyle pointed out long ago. It is absolutely incredible that a man of intelligence should compare a religion which favours slavery and polygamy with the religion of Christ. Christianity was never intended to set up a Utopian World-State. It leaves that work to Islam, and incidentally, to Mr. Wells. Christianity does not tell us to expect the regeneration of mankind. It *does* tell us to expect and work for the regeneration of men. It goes to work in a way that thinkers of the type of Mr. Wells would do worse than to imitate, and teaches that when you have saved a man you have saved mankind. If one man can be made clean, there is not a man on earth that cannot be made clean. Christianity started out not with a perfect world, but with a perfect Man. I quite agree that environment is something. In many cases

¹ "A Modern Utopia."

it is everything ; and it is precisely because I think that that I will not tolerate the presence of Islam.

A book well worth reading, from the missionary point of view, is Mr. Price Collier's "The West in the East."¹ Like everything that Mr. Collier writes, it is sensible, racy, and full of literary charm. His opinion of the individual missionary is a generous one. On p. 53 he is discussing the prospect of converting the world: "Far be it from me, a Christian, to discourage the attempt. On the contrary, Christianity has become so clogged with materialistic interpretations of its messages ; the tent-making and fishing Apostles have been so lost in cardinals and bishops living in palaces with the revenues of princes, that the Christian missionary seems almost the one fine and genuine thing left. Just because there is no hope of visible success for him, he is the more admirable and the more Christian."

He quotes with favour these very outspoken opinions of Sir Harry Johnston, who, he says, at least cannot be accused of not knowing India: "The 162,000,000 Hindu men and women and children follow for the most part wholly unreasonable forms of religion, quite incompatible with modern ideas of physical development, social progress, sanitation, avoidance of cruelty, and unrestricted intercourse with one's fellow-men." "The Hindu religion is a mixture of nightmare nonsense and time-wasting rubbish, fulfilling no useful end whatever, only adding to the general burden borne by humanity in its struggle for existence" (p. 214). Again, on the missionaries, Mr. Collier says: "I know of nothing more courageous, patient, and self-sacrificing than the work some of them are doing" (p. 521).

It is a pity, however, that Mr. Collier repeats the exploded objection of missions in India being a failure. There are, he says (p. 228), something over 1,000 ordained missionaries in India, with about the same number of native pastors. "They have made practically no impresssion upon India, and the best of them, both European and native, admit as much themselves.

¹ Duckworth, 1911.

The converts are almost entirely from the lowest class of natives." It makes patience very difficult in dealing with a statement like this. You have, according to Mr. Collier, 2,000 workers to cope with over 300,000,000 of people; and yet he calmly sits down and says they have made practically no impression on India, and admit it themselves. But have they failed? It was estimated, according to the census of ten years ago, that whereas the entire population of India had increased by 3 per cent., the number of Indian Christians had increased by 50 per cent.¹ The recent census has also produced some remarkable figures. In the Punjab there are 165,000 Indian Christians, as against 37,000 ten years ago. In the Nagpur division the Christians in 1881 numbered 36,000, to-day they muster 177,000. In Travancore the population has increased 16 per cent. since 1901, and the Christians have increased by 30 per cent.² The total increase of Indian Christians since 1901 has been 34.2 per cent. As regards the educated classes, the Hindu does not share the opinion as to Christian failure. In tract No. 10, dealing with the Arya Somaj, these words occur: "The followers of the Prophet of Nazareth . . . are sapping the foundations of Hinduism." On the cover of the pamphlet it is asserted that Christianity is making "steady progress."³ These are not the opinions of missionaries, but the words of the enemies, deadly enemies, of Christianity. Moreover, it is important to remember that there are over one hundred leading men in India to-day who are converts from Islam, men occupying important positions in the State or in missions.

I am afraid we must also discount Mr. Collier's strictures on the Korean people, and his depreciation of missions there. The country, he says, "has been a paradise for the missionary." The success of Christianity he puts down to the pliability and laziness of the people, who, he declares, are "the most contemptible and supine race in the East." Compare with this Mrs.

¹ *Nineteenth Century*, June, 1907.

² *C.M.S. Gazette*, November, 1911.

³ *Church Missionary Review*, April, 1910

Bishop's testimony: "Mentally the Koreans are liberally endowed. . . . The foreign teachers bearing willing testimony to their mental adroitness and quickness of perception."¹ The "missionary's paradise" tends to fade a little when we read on p. 67 in the first volume of Mrs. Bishop's book: "The indifference is extreme, the religious faculty is absent, there are no religious ideas to appeal to, and the moral teachings of Confucius have little influence with any class." It is quite a mistake, she says, to regard the Koreans as simply waiting for a new religion. They were quite satisfied to have none, and for some years progress was slow indeed. Even to-day in Korea there is a trifle of some 12,000,000 outside the Christian fold. Mr. Collier is hard to please. Either missions are making no headway in India, or they are too successful in Korea. It is difficult to know what he wants, and apparently he does not know himself.

Another "fact" in the book is worth noting and answering. He tells us that the civilian or the soldier would be quite willing to see all the missionaries packed off. Mr. Collier should read the *Journal* of the Royal Geographical Society for October, 1911. He will there find that far from sending them home, their work is praised by such men as Sir Walter Lawrence, Sir Thomas Holdich, and Lord Curzon, who were all present, and voiced their high opinion of the missionary in India.²

We are told that the East asks why we do not convert Europeans first, and then preach to other nations. The obvious answer is that, when a man is converted, whether European or Eastern, he ceases to ask the question. He learns that the first duty of a Christian is to evangelize (not necessarily convert) other people, and to that duty he will bend his whole life, and whether they hear or forbear he will not cease his labours so long as one human soul exists who has had no chance of sharing what he considers the noblest privilege of mankind.

The novel of to-day, when it refers to missions at all, has

¹ "Korea and her Neighbours," 1898.

² Quoted in *Church Missionary Review*, November, 1911.

this same tendency to depreciate them. We quite understand that the novel exists to please, rather than to teach, but it has to be remembered that tens of thousands receive impressions for good or evil from novels, who hardly read anything else. The works of Sir Conan Doyle or Mr. Jacobs are excellent examples of the novel's right use. I cannot say as much of Mrs. Grimshaw's "When the Red Gods call." Here is a book which has, although only just published, already gone into a second edition, and in most respects deserves its popularity. It is the story of a man of good parentage who has mixed in rough life abroad. The scene is laid in British New Guinea, and many are the beautiful descriptions of the country. The tendency I have spoken of comes when Lynch, the hero, looks for a wife at Port Moresby. Here are his words: "I didn't want a wild little savage, but a girl who could speak a bit of English, and was handy about a white man's house; and that meant a mission girl, and that meant marrying her. . . . Chalmers (the missionary) is a good man, and a plucky. . . . One of his teachers would take me over the mission school, and if I saw any girl that I liked, of suitable age, he would marry us—under protest he took care to add." He finds his girl, not in the school, but elsewhere, and sends her to the mission.

"They put her in a teacher's family, and started to instruct her about Noah and the ark, and Jonah's whale, and all the rest of it. I suppose it didn't do her any harm." Now, my criticism of language like this is not so much that it misrepresents a man like Lynch—probably it does not—but that it presents to the average reader a totally wrong impression of life in the mission-field. Mrs. Grimshaw, of course, is not concerned with upholding missions in this case, but that is no reason for misrepresenting them.

In the case of "The Unknown God"¹ we have, perhaps, the most glaring example of this modern tendency to belittle missionary effort. From first to last the book is an attack on missionary work in China. Paul Hancock is a young evangelist with plenty of money, whose mind becomes set against the

¹ Mr. Putnam Weale. Macmillan, 1911.

work from the moment he enters the Celestial Empire. On p. 177 he reflects in this way: "How hard it was really to succeed, save by following the stereotyped and often unlovely system which the missions had evolved in self-defence! As if conscious of their severe limitations, as if conscious that they had come too late in the day, when ideas and customs were so fixed in the very life-blood of the people that to uproot them was impossible, the missions had become the homes of schoolmen who hoped, by creating such centres of activity, gradually to attract the more open-minded and the children of the open-minded, and working through them and through the great floods of literature which they unloosed thus, to collect knots of adherents. Beyond that they had no real hope, no real goal."

Well might the *Spectator* say with reference to this book and such passages in it: "Is the picture true? Possibly so in this or that individual instance, but, as a whole, it is contradicted by a great multitude of witnesses. We venture to say that in the whole history of missions there is nothing that surpasses the successes that have been achieved of late years in China."¹ Apparently the opinions of "Mr. Denning," the Commissioner, find favour with the author, since the missionary has no answer for them. On p. 201 this gentleman asserts that only a hundred years ago England's treatment of the criminal was more brutal than that of China to-day. It is a common remark, but there is nothing in it. The faults of England are in spite of her religion; the faults of China are the result of religion. "It is highly important to remember," says Dr. A. H. Smith, "that neither for evils arising from wrong moral teaching nor for others has Chinese ethics ever furnished preventive or remedy."² Dr. Smith directly blames Confucianism for the evils inflicted on womankind in China.

As regards the contemporary poet, the reader must be blind indeed who does not read in much of our modern poetry the call to missionary effort. Perhaps the poet is to be the great voice of the future, rousing the Christianity of England to her

¹ October 7, 1911.

² "Village Life in China," p. 306.

duties in the world. We are waiting, it may be, for this new vision from what Wordsworth calls "The breath and finer spirit of knowledge." Great movements of the past have been heralded with song, and time after time it has been the poet who has led in the vanguard of progress. There is, perhaps, no poet of to-day so worthy in genius and in reverence to voice the mission of England as Mr. Alfred Noyes. No one but a Christian could write "The Cottage of the Kindly Light," or give us the lofty morality of "The Statue." In "The Lotus of Wisdom" the poet stands on "The breathless borders of the world of strife," and sees the "Weary faces in the lotus-bloom" where the "Branches toss and weep at will, as if their sap were fed with human souls."

"Come, let us go!" he cries. "Take up thy cross and bind
The crown of thorns upon thy brows again,
And we will seek the world of endless pain,
The tortured stars, the wild tormented wind,
The passionate heart-break of the world of strife
Where, wrapt in Hell, the soul looks up to Heaven!
Here knowledge as a bride to Death is given,
The lotus blossoms on the tree of life."

It would be difficult to discover a more moving picture of the world's ills and of their remedy.

In "Nelson's Year" Mr. Noyes calls upon us to "Hasten the Kingdom." It is no dream to him, for "the night and morning meet," even where there is strife and pain.

"Ah, God speed that grander morrow,
When the world's divinest sorrow
Shall show how Love stands knocking at the world's unopened doors."

England must see the millions that bow to her decree, and, seeing them, bow her head in humility. The kingdom is hers not for self-glory.

"Not for the pride or power
God gave thee this in dower;
But, now, the West and East have met and wept their mortal loss,
Now that their tears have spoken,
And the long dumb spell is broken,
Is it nothing that thy banner bears the red eternal cross?"

The poet recurs to the call upon his countrymen in the lines
 "In time of war":

"Hasten the Kingdom, England, queen and mother;
 Little we know of all time's works and ways;
 Yet this, this, this is sure; we need none other
 Knowledge or wisdom, hope or aim or praise.
 But to keep this one strong banner flying
 In this one faith that none shall e'er disprove,
 Then drive the embattled world before thee, crying,
 There is one Emperor, whose name is Love."

Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie in "The Sale of St. Thomas" has given us some vivid word-painting of missionary dangers and impulses. The poem is founded on St. Thomas's traditional connection with India to which duty calls him, but from which the voice of danger strives to keep him. On p. 22 India is described as—

"That frantic pomp and hurrying forth of life,
 As if a man should enter at unawares
 The dreaming mind of Satan, gorgeously
 Imagining his eternal hell of lust."

The poem is, for the greater part, an account of the conflict of the Apostle between desire and duty—a conflict repeated to-day in the life of many a missionary. St. Thomas tells the captain of the ship that he has decided not to go, when a stranger appears on the quay, who claims the Apostle as his slave, sells him to the captain, and he is thus carried to India against his will. The stranger's parting word is a rebuke, not of St. Thomas's fear—which was not the fault—but of prudence, "the deadly sin." To England, as to the missionary, the stranger's words are appropriate:

"Knowing the impossible, see thou try beyond it
 Into impossible things, unlikely ends;
 And thou shalt find thy knowledgable desire
 Grow large as all the regions of thy soul."

It is quite impossible to omit all reference to Mr. Kipling, who has "roused the sleeping nerve-centres of Imperialism," The "Recessional" it is foolish to call poetry according to

Mr. Le Gallienne, but there are some lines which even he admits to that eminence :

“ The depth and dream of my desire,
 The bitter paths wherein I stray,
 Thou knowest who hast made the Fire,
 Thou knowest who hast made the Clay.
 One stone the more swings to her place
 In that dread temple of Thy worth—
 It is enough that through Thy grace
 I saw nought common on Thy earth.
 Take not that vision from my ken ;
 Oh, whatsoe'er may spoil or speed,
 Help me to need no aid from men
 That I may help such men as need.”

These beautiful lines may surely be considered as containing the substance of missionary effort. It was when St. Peter learnt to call nothing common or unclean that he began his work among the heathen. Far off may be “such men as need,” separated not only by distance, but by a hundred influences, and yet one with us in the human necessity and the human desire. It is said that half the world's population are ignorant of the Gospel, and have had no opportunity of embracing its comfort. That is a state of things which must cease. The advance of knowledge and of science may help it to cease. Never before in history have there been such facilities for advancing Christianity. We stand to-day on the threshold of splendid endeavour, and the words of Mr. Stephen Phillips are the reflection of many thoughts :

“ In the years that have been I have bound man closer to man,
 And closer woman to woman ;
 And a stranger hath seen in a stranger his brother at last,
 And a sister in eyes that were strange,
 In the years that shall be I will bind me nation to nation,
 And shore unto shore, saith our God.”¹

¹ “Midnight.”

