

Some Things New In India

By Rev. E. M. Wherry, D.D.

No year passes by in India without disclosing many things new. New railways are continually being added to the ever-increasing area gridironed by rails of iron and steel. New canals are being dug in order to utilize the river waters for irrigating purposes. New colleges and schools are established for the education of the boys and girls, while industrial and technical institutes arise to train India's people in the arts of

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modern handicraft. New cults in religious faith and life are continually arising to testify to the spiritual awakening among the people. India moves, and moves more rapidly than most of us realize.

But it is not to tell of these movements I have undertaken to write to-day. My purpose is to chronicle some events, which mark the advance of the Kingdom of Christ in India. Among these I would mention the union of the Protestant Churches in India. Of these Churches thirteen are Presbyterian in doctrine and polity.

Forty years ago a movement began under the leadership of the late Dr. John H. Morrison, of the American Presbyterian Mission, which resulted in the organization of the Presbyterian Alliance in India. This was the first step towards organic union. The way was long, many obstacles stood in the way, but persistent, patient effort at length culminated in the organization of the Presbyterian Church in India, which was consummated in December, 1904. The Rev. Kali Charan Chatterjee, D.D., of Hashyarpur, Punjab, was the first moderator. The first meeting of the General Assembly, after the consummation of the union, met in Nagpur, in December, 1905. It was a glad day when this Assembly met, representing nine of the thirteen Presbyterian bodies in India, and listened to the venerable moderator's earnest discourse on Love. Here, for the first time in the history of Protestant missions, sat in solemn assembly the representatives of a real Indian Church; with a converted Brahmin in the moderator's chair.

The Presbyterian Church in India has six synods, as follows: Synod of Bengal, Synod of Bombay and Central Provinces, Synod of North India, Synod of the Punjab, Synod of Rajputana and Central India, and the Synod of South India. There are in all sixteen Presbyteries, which had elected eighty commissioners to represent them; of whom thirty-seven ministers and thirteen elders were able to attend. The proceedings of this Assembly, as in the case of all National Congresses and conventions in India, were conducted in English throughout. The vernacular languages spoken by the Indian representatives were eleven in number: Tamil, Telugu, Mahratti, Gujrati, Bengali, Hindi, Marwari, Urdu, Nipali, Santhali and Panjabi. English is the "lingua Franca" of India to-day. A most interesting service was held one evening when song and prayer were voiced in ten of these languages.

The business of this Assembly naturally considered in the formulation of the rules for the conduct of the judicatories, standing rules for the Assembly, the construction of the Boards of missions, publication, etc.

One of the gravest questions which came before the new Assembly was that of polygamous applicants for baptism. This does not mean simply the question of the admission into the Church of Mohammedans who may have more wives than one, but in India's wide domain involves Hindus and low caste people who are polygamists. Remotely it would in principle reach out to the Himalaya tribes who have more than one husband! This question often assumes forms of great complexity. Here is a Muslim, who has, say, two wives. Wife number two is the mother of his children; or, maybe, he has children by both wives. Again,

the second wife may also desire baptism; or it may be, as in a case I know, both wives desire to be baptized, but neither wishes to give up her husband. It is possible that one or more wives of a polygamist husband may seek baptism. What is to be done? Several courses of proceeding are suggested. Some say, baptize the candidates and leave them, if they desire, in the position the Gospel has found them, but allow no baptized Christian to have more than one wife. Others say, do not, in any case, admit into the Church either man or woman living in a polygamist condition. These are the extreme positions. Some would permit such converts to enter the Church as Catechumens, but not to be baptized until they could by voluntary adjustment adopt a monogamist life. Still others would baptize and admit to membership, but refuse official relations in Church. These base their judgment upon I Tim. 3: 2 and Titus 1: 6. The Assembly appointed a committee to confer with other bodies in India and to report at the next Assembly so as to secure as wide a consensus of opinion as possible before uttering a final judgment in the case.

Another question of most practical interest is the shepherding of a vastly increasing number of ignorant low caste converts. The Assembly has set itself to the formulation of a comprehensive scheme on this subject.

A committee was appointed as a standing committee on Church union, whose duty will be to keep alive the zeal for the union of evangelical Churches until not only all Presbyterian bodies may be united, but all evangelical bodies may be gathered into one great Indian National Church, which shall not only present a united front to non-Christian peoples in India, but also engage in a systematic effort to evangelize the Empire. There is good reason to believe that Congregationalists, Independents, Wesleyans and Methodists will join with the Presbyterians in forming such a Church.

The next new thing in India of which special mention should be made, is the great revival. This began in the Khasi Hills of Assam, in 1905, where the Welsh missions seemed to come in for a distinct part of the blessing vouchsafed to the Welsh people. Suddenly as on Pentecost the Spirit came down upon a meeting of Presbytery and thence spread abroad until the whole Christian community had been moved. Most extraordinary meetings were reported; prayer-meetings holding all day and long into the night; young people and even children being endowed with a spirit of faith and prayer which transformed them into spirit-filled messengers of God, used to lead backsliders and wicked men to consecrate themselves to God's service. One little girl is reported to have gone from house to house, and village to village pleading with the people to turn to God and to believe in the Gospel of his Son. Much phenomena of an ecstatic character is reported; sinners falling to the ground confessing their sins with loud cries and tears; some fainting away, others seeing visions or a strange light, and almost all feeling a certain something come upon them with great power. Thousands of people have been converted and the whole heathen attitude changed. The work still goes on. In the Punjab, similar scenes have

been enacted and in like manner in North India, in Bombay and Madras, the power of the Spirit is being revealed. And now comes the news that the revival has broken out in the Lushai Hills, where dwell the head-hunting savage tribes whom the English were compelled to conquer. Thirty-five years ago the Lushai tribes raided the tea plantations of Assam, killed the planters and carried off into slavery over one hundred British subjects, including Mary Winchester, a planter's daughter, whose father they murdered. An expedition waged a bloody war with these Hill chiefs before they could rescue these slaves. Sixteen years later and the raiding began anew, and Lieutenant Browne and others were killed. And as late as 1896, the last expedition was sent against these tribes after which their country was annexed to the British dominions. A mission was started among these turbulent savages by the Welsh in 1891. The South Lushai district was occupied by the Baptists. After the revival began in Cachar, the Lushai Christians began to pray for a revival among them. Meetings were kept up for a long while, but no answer seemed to be granted to the many prayers offered. The people became luke-warm and some seemed to lose faith in God as a hearer of prayer.

But some of the more earnest people went over to the Assembly meetings held at Mairang, in Assam, and, although they could understand little of the language spoken, they seemed to get on fire with the revival spirit. On their return, they called the Lushai Christians together and began to hold meetings. The people seemed to be cold and the meetings fruitless, but at the very last meeting, while they were singing "God be with you till we meet again," the Spirit of God came upon them. First one, then another, began to confess their sins and to cry for pardon. "It was just one torrent of confession and prayer." "The Spirit of God had truly come and according to Christ's promise was convincing men of sin. It seemed as if the Judgment Day had come, so loud were the cries for mercy and pardon. Ringing hymns of praise for souls saved, alternating with prayers for convicted sinners, marked the meetings which followed. These meetings often lasted for six hours each. And so the work goes on. The tribes so long under Satan's power have been made free. May the reviving power increase in force until all Christendom be brought back to the simple faith and love of these Khassi and Lushai Christians.

Letters from Correspondents

Form for Marriage Ceremony

Editors The Presbyterian:

I enclose a form of marriage ceremony once used by the pastor of a large Presbyterian church. He had no form, he varied it for each couple. This is by no means the most beautiful of his addresses, but they were not taken down. As forms are now being discussed, this may prove of interest. E. V. I.

THE INVOCATION

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who has taught

us to acknowledge thee in all our ways, let thy gracious presence be with us now, and let thy favor rest upon us, through Jesus Christ.

Let thy Fatherly blessing rest upon these two, now about to be united together in marriage. As they give themselves each unto the other, enable them to give themselves afresh unto thee, that their united life may be wholly consecrated and happy. Hear us in these our petitions, bless us, and accept us, through Christ our Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

THE ADDRESS

The union which you two are now about to enter, dear friends, is the closest and tenderest into which human beings can come. It is a union founded upon mutual knowledge, experience and affection, and to Christian people it is a union in the Lord. Marriage is God's institution—one man and one woman joined together for their life—and you desire, as you appear here, to acknowledge your dependence upon God Almighty and to put your united lives into His holy keeping.

God has ordained that the husband should be the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of his Church. That is not a headship of mere authority. It is one of comfort; one of tenderness; one of affection. The highest ideal that you can have before you is that which is presented in God's Holy Word: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it."

That love is pure, tender, genial and constant, and a love even unto death.

And with affection somewhat like unto this are you to guard and cherish the life which is now opening before you.

"And let the wife see that she reverence her husband." It becomes you to promote his happiness to the utmost of your power, by sympathy, genial consecration and by constant kindness and care to do all that it is competent for you to do to promote the completeness, happiness and usefulness of his life.

You have both been taught from your childhood to fear God. Live in that fear, and look for the blessing he gives which secures true and abiding felicity.

In the hope and with the prayer that it may be so with you, and that this union upon the earth may be a happy preparation for union in heaven, I now proceed, before God and all these witnesses, to unite you together.

Minister, to the man.—You do take her whom you hold by the hand to be your lawful and wedded wife?

The man.—I do.

Minister.—And you promise to be to her a faithful and loving husband so long as you both shall live?

The man.—I do.

Minister to the woman.—You do take him whom you hold by the hand to be your lawful and wedded husband, and promise to be a dutiful and affectionate wife so long as you both shall live?

The woman.—I do.

Minister to the man.—Put the ring on her finger in token of these pledges.

(After the ring is placed:)

The minister.—And now in the presence of God Almighty, and of these witnesses, I pronounce you two, husband and wife, according to God's holy ordinance. "Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," and may God bless you. The Lord bless and keep you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

THE PRAYER

O God Almighty, our Heavenly Father, what we have now done in thy name on the earth, be thou pleased to ratify from above. Let thy favor continue