

Griffin's History

Chapter VII

MISSIONISM IN AFRICA

The following was taken from the Universe, and published in the "Signs of the Times," from which we have obtained it. It speaks for itself:

"The Missionary Enterprise at Home and Abroad.—

Missionaries, notwithstanding they profess to be elevated above ordinary men in their motives and desires, and to be actuated in their efforts for the conversion of the world, by the most disinterested love to God and their fellowmen, are nevertheless men subject to like passions as the generality of mankind are, have similar natural propensities and designs, love the good things of this world, and consider themselves perfectly justified in doing all they can to secure the confidence, esteem and support of the religious public, in order to be comfortably provided for in their efforts for the propagation of their faith. They, therefore, in their public reports, invariably labor to make the most favorable impression upon the public mind with reference to the results of the so— called momentous undertaking in which they are engaged; not omitting in the accounts they give to the progress of the good work, the most trivial affair which they think they may in any way construe, whether justly or erroneously, as being in the least degree indicative of the advancement of their cause. Nor do some of these good and holy men hesitate, when they think it is necessary for the good of the cause, that they should do so, to make statements in their reports which are utterly false.

"An English gentleman, now residing in our city, and connected with one of the most respectable commercial houses down town, and who, previous to his coming to this country, spent several years in Sierra Leone, having been appointed, by the British government, manager of the liberated African Department in that country, gave us the following account of Missionary proceedings there, as witnessed by himself. We give it publicity by that gentleman's permission, who, being himself a Christian and a lover of truth, is by no means desirous to keep back the truth from his fellow— men, lest it should give offense to the friends of the Missionary cause.

"A missionary situated on the Island of St. Mary, under the care of the Church Missionary Society, sent home his annual report to the Board in London. The report was published in the Society's Missionary Magazine, and was of course

circulated through the British empire and other parts of the world, and was universally read by the friends and supporters of the Church Missionary Society. A few copies reached the missionary stations in Sierra Leone, and one of these fell into the hands of the Manager of the Liberated African Department. He opened and read the report sent home by the Missionary on the Island of St. Mary, in whose neighborhood he happened to be at the time. The report gave a most glowing account of a great religious excitement then felt in that place; and among other things it stated, that the chapel was constantly crowded with hearers, who manifested a deep feeling while listening to the word preached. It stated also that the neighboring country, separated from his station by a river, was inhabited by a race of people who were of the Mahomedan faith; that this people gave the most encouraging indications of their preparedness for the reception of the Gospel, and that even their priests flocked over in crowds—hundreds of them having visited him, wading through the water for that purpose, spending day after day with him in religious conversation, and reading with the most profound interest an Arabic bible which he had in his possession.

"Amazed at the contents of the report, he showed it to another gentleman, a resident of the place, and fully conversant with all missionary proceedings there, and asked him if he could say what it meant. The gentleman, on reading it, was not less amazed than himself—the whole report covering the awakening, and the interest felt by the Mahomedan tribes, and their priests, being a mere fabrication of the Missionary's brain, without one word of truth in it. The two gentlemen, however, called upon the Missionary, and showing him the article, to which his name was affixed, asked him if that had been written by him? His answer was in the affirmative. He was then asked, 'What do you mean by these statements? Where are those Mahomedans you speak of? When were they here? Who has seen any of them or their people with you! !' He replied, 'Gentlemen, other Missionaries send home good reports of their doings, and of the success which attends their labor; and if I do not the same. I shall not be able to retain a situation here.

"Be it remembered that this account we have received from the gentleman himself, who, with the Missionary's report in his hand, questioned him upon the subject, and received his answer—a gentleman of unquestionable veracity, and whose statements may be fully relied on. Missionaries, doubtless, are anxious to do all the good they can, by their public ministry, to the people among whom they labor—or at least they are very desirous to have large congregations to hear them when they preach—and if the people will not voluntarily attend when they are requested to

do so, they think it perfectly right to drive them, contrary to their inclination, to the sanctuary of God, that thereby they might be saved.

"Mr. P, manager of the Liberated African Department in Sierra Leone, informed us, that shortly after his arrival in that country, being then in a town called Regent, he went out one morning and saw the colored police about the streets, collecting the people together, and driving them with whips. He went up to them and asked what they were about? They said that they were taking the people to meeting. He asked them by whose authority they were doing so. They said that they were ordered to do so by the Missionary. He replied: 'You go and tell the Missionary that I forbid you doing so any more'— and the converted Africans were released from the power of the police, and were permitted to go where their inclinations led them, or their business called them. Shortly afterwards the Missionary called on him, and asked him why he prevented the police taking the people to meeting. He replied: 'I have no objections for these people to go and hear you, if they are so inclined; but I will not allow them to be driven with whips to church against their own will, when their business might call them elsewhere.' The Missionary answered: 'It is the only way we can get them there, and if we do not use such means they will not attend.' After some further remarks by each of the parties, the Missionary continued: 'My predecessor, Mr. Johnson, used to report to the Board, that his chapel was crowded with people, to attend public prayer, every morning and evening in the week; and I understand that he employed the police to bring them together, as long as he was here, and therefore always secured a full attendance. The Board will expect the same report from me; and I see no reason why I should not be allowed to use the same means as he employed to bring the congregation together.

"The mission in Sierra Leone is represented in the annual report of the Society as being in a most flourishing state; the preaching of the Missionaries having produced the most wonderful effects in the conversion and elevation of that once degraded people. Wonderful indeed is the change wrought among them! ! How elevated must be their state, how thorough and perfectly satisfactory their conversion, and how intense the interest they feel for the truths of the Gospel, which the zealous and self-denying Missionary preaches to them, when that Missionary is under the necessity of sending round his police to drive them with whips to meeting, before they can be induced to come and hear him preach, and unite with him, as their beloved pastor, in public worship! ! !

"But to employ whippers— in to drive the converted heathen to the sanctuary of God, thereby to secure large congregations of attentive and interested hearers,

listening with deep emotion to the preaching of the Gospel, is not peculiar to the Missionaries on the African coast; the practice is common in other parts of the world, when it is in the Missionary's power to exercise such authority. Herman Melville, in his Narrative of Adventures in the South Sea, makes mention of a similar class of people in the employment of the Missionaries in Polynesia. He speaks upon the subject as follows:

" The hypocrisy in matters of religion, so apparent in all Polynesian converts, is most injudiciously nourished in Tahiti, by a zealous, and in many cases, a coercive superintendence over their spiritual well being. But this coercive superintendence is only manifested with respect to the common people, their superiors being exempt from it. On Sunday morning when the prospect is rather small for a full house in the minor or inferior churches, a parcel of fellows are actually sent out with rattans into the highways and by— ways, as whippers— in of the congregation. This is a sober fact. With abhorrence and disgust the custom is alluded to by a late benevolent visitor at the island. See page 763 of the Memoirs of the Life and Gospel Labors of the late Daniel Wheeler. These worthies constitute a religious police; and you always know them by the great white diapers they wear. On week days they are quite as busy as on Sundays, to the great terror of the inhabitants, going all over the island, and spying out the wickedness thereof. Moreover, they are the collectors of fines—levied generally in grassmats—for obstinate non— attendance upon Divine worship, and other offences amenable to the ecclesiastical judicature of the Missionaries. These fellows are called 'Kinnahippers.'

" The Kinnahippers are hated by the islanders, and especially by the ladies. And no wonder; the impertinent varlets, popping into their houses at all hours, are forever prying into their peccadilloes. Mr. Roloo, who at times was patriotic and pensive, and mourned the evils under which his country was groaning, frequently inveighed against the statute, which thus authorized an utter stranger (the Missionary,) to interfere with domestic arrangements. He himself — quite a ladies' man — had often been annoyed thereby. He considered the Kinnahippers a bore. Besides their confounded inquisitiveness, they add insult to injury, by making a point of dining out every day at some hut within the limits of their jurisdiction. As for the gentleman of the house, his meek endurance of these things is amazing. But 'good, easy man,' there is nothing for him but to be as hospitable as possible. These gentry are indefatigable. At the dead of night prowling round the houses—and in the day— time hunting amorous couples in groves. Often when seated in a house, conversing quietly with its inmates, I have known the family betray the greatest confusion at the sudden announcement of a Kinnahipper's being in sight. To be

reported by one of these officials as a 'Tootai Owre,' signifying a bad person or disbeliever in Christianity, is as much dreaded as the forefinger of Titus Oates was, levelled at an alleged papist.

" 'But the islanders take a sly revenge upon them. Old Bob, one day drawing near home, and learning that two of them were just then making a domiciliary visit at his house, ran behind a bush, and as they came forth, two green bread fruits, from a hand unseen, took them each between the shoulders. The sailors in the calabaza were witnesses to this, as well as several natives, who, when the intruders were out of sight, applauded captain Bob's spirit in no measured terms—the ladies present vehemently joining in. Upon entering a dwelling the Kinnahippers oftentimes volunteered a pharisaical prayer meeting; hence, they go in secret by the name of 'Boora Artuas,' signifying 'Pray— to— Gods.'"

DEAN'S ILLUSTRATION

We have now given as much relative to the Missionary effort in Asia and Africa, as our limits will permit. We will, however, give an extract from the "Address of Rev. Mr. Dean, at the Brooklyn Anniversary," showing the great importance of a continuous effort, and the awful consequence of an abatement, viz:

"Let us suppose, my friends, that you had sent one of your children down into a deep well to gather diamonds. Suppose you had prepared all the machinery and materials, and that you had sent one down into the deep and dismal place, to collect, amid the damps of that dangerous pit, ornaments, with which to deck an honored guest. You have prepared the rope and let him gently down; his efforts have been successful, he had collected a rich treasure from among the filth and rubbish of the place, and now you begin to draw him up laden with gems which shall sparkle in beauty on the honored brow.

"And, after you began to draw him up, you become tired or discouraged, and let him fall suddenly to the bottom, and all the rich load is scattered and lost! Your Missionaries, my friends, have been gathering with great toil, amid the deadly damps of the pit of heathenism, diamonds which are to glitter in your Saviour's crown to all eternity, and will you let go the rope? Will you suffer the precious treasure to be lost?"

Rev. Mr. Dean is a missionary to Asia, and highly skilled in missionary theology and practice. His views are ably and forcibly illustrated; and if his figure of

illustration is to be understood to the full extent, it is clearly shown by analogy, that the Missionaries themselves as well as the heathen, are in great danger, should their friends in the United States let go the rope.

Mr. Dean, towards the close of his Address, says, "I expect soon to go again down into the pit, to gather diamonds," relying of course on his friends here to hold the rope. This whole figure, used here by Rev. Mr. Dean is quite orthodox, having been borrowed from Rev. Mr. Fuller, the great head of modern missions. And should it have the desired effect in stimulating the friends of mission to distil showers of money upon those who labor in the pit, with the liberal use of the rattan, they will, no doubt, work wonders in the name of Jesus— and at least equal the Jews, Pilate and the Roman soldiers, in decking His head with a glittering crown.

We must pass Europe for the following very obvious reason, given by Rev. Dr. Judson, in an address, which, he being unable to speak, was read to the audience by the Rev. Baron Stow:

"The greatest popular objection to the missionary enterprise is drawn from the small success which has attended missionary effort among the great nations of the earth. Some progress has been made, in converting the ruder tribes of man; but it must be confessed, that no encouraging impression has been made, in a single instance, upon any great and particularly civilized people."

The nations of Europe, like the United States, consider themselves "great and particularly civilized," and refuse, to the missionaries, the use of the "rattan," and hence their want of success. It is no uncommon thing in those countries to see crowds of men and women, either engaged in business or amusing themselves on days of preaching; and still, all ecclesiastical power, to force them to church and to Heaven, is absolutely denied to these pious, proselyting Evangelists.