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THE

CHURCHMAN

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ART. I.—THE SYRIAN CHURCH OF TRAVANCORE.

TO turn away from the stirring controversies and the vigorous life that characterize the Church of England at the present time to the confused records and the partially dormant state of the ancient Syrian Church in South India, is like forsaking the busy turmoil of a modern city for the tangled recesses of an Indian jungle. The ground is cumbered by the wild growth of ages, but there is a rude dignity about its calm existence, and perhaps so grand a possibility hidden in its neglected soil, that we feel, as we study the past and the present, that there is more than enough to call for our respect, our sympathy, and if need be our help.

The early history of the Syrian Church is obscured by legends and clouded by myths. In the first place, we find that several different theories have been held as to the mode of the introduction of Christianity into this part of the world. For a long time it was supposed that the evangelization of South India was accomplished by St. Thomas, the Apostle. La Croze (the universal scholar, as Gibbon calls him) has drawn up the following interesting account of the legend from all the authorities he could collect:

> In the division of all the parts of the world which was made among the holy Apostles, India fell to the lot of St. Thomas, who, after having established Christianity in Arabia Felix and in the island of Dioscoride, afterwards called Socotora, arrived at Cranganore, where the principal king of the Coast of Malabar then resided. It was there that the fabulous adventures happened of which we read in this Apostle's Life, written by the pretended Abdias of Babylon. The holy Apostle, having established many churches at Cranganore, passed to Coulan (now Quilon), a celebrated town of the same coast, where he converted many persons to Christianity. Having departed to the other coast, now known by the name of Coromandel, he stopped at Meliapore, a town which the Euro-

peans call St. Thomé, where he is said to have converted the king and all his people. He went from thence to China, and remained in a town called Camballé, where he made numerous conversions and built many churches.

St. Thomas returned from China to Meliapore, where the great success which attended his labours among the heathen excited against him the hatred and envy of two Brahmins who are the priests of the idolatrous superstition of India. These men stirred up the people, who combined to stone the holy Apostle. After his execution, one of the Brahmins, observing that he still breathed, pierced him with a lance, which put an end to his life. [1]

Such an origin would lend additional interest to the Syrian Church if we could accept the story. Unfortunately it appears to be no more than a legend. The only evidence given to support it is the fact that the Christians of this district have constantly been known as "the St. Thomé Christians."

A more probable explanation of the name, however, furnishes at the same time a more likely account of the introduction of Christianity. We learn from the "Kerul Oodputtee," the ancient Malabar history, that in the sixth century a wealthy Christian merchant named Thomé Cannaner, or Thomas Cana, landed at Cranganore, where he was well received, and was induced to settle by great privileges conferred upon him. This man was usually called Mar Thomas, and after him probably the converts were called "St. Thomé Christians."

But when we speak of the Christianity of these converts it must be remembered that their faith was not of the orthodox type. The reign of the Emperor Theodosius II. of Rome was signalized by the development and suppression of the Nestorian heresy.[2] Driven from the Empire, the doctrines and adherents of Nestorius found a refuge among the Christians of Persia. The Church of Persia had been founded by the missionaries of Syria, and it was in the school of Edessa that the rising generations of the faithful imbibed their theological idiom. Its head, Ibas, was favourable to Nestorius, and translated some works of Diodore of Tarsus, and Theodore of Mopsuestia, the masters of Nestorius, into Syriac. The writings of these teachers, in default of those of Nestorius himself, whose works had been as far as possible destroyed, were diligently read by the Nestorians, and propagated the errors from which the heresy sprang. Thus from the school of Edessa Nestorian-

[1] La Croze, tome i. bk. i. p. 59.

[2] The tenets of Nestorius may be briefly summarized thus: He discriminated with too great nicety the humanity of his *Master*, Christ, from the Divinity of his *Lord*, Jesus. The Virgin Mary he revered as the mother of Christ, but he was offended at the title "Mother of God," a title which was, he believed, "calculated to alarm the timorous, to mislead the simple, to amuse the profane, and to justify, by a seeming resemblance, the old genealogy of Olympus."

ism was disseminated in Persia and India. The Pepper Coast of Malabar, and the isles of the ocean, Socotora and Ceylon, were peopled with an increasing multitude of Christians whose bishops and clergy derived their ordination from Babylon.

Yet another origin has been ascribed to the Syrian Church. It has been thought probable that St. Mark, after the establishment of the Church at Alexandria, would not have neglected the opportunities offered by the large commerce carried on between that city and India, of sending Christian teachers to the coast of Malabar. There is, however, scarcely any evidence to recommend this theory; and if such a mission was sent, its orthodox converts were soon absorbed into the ranks of the heretic settlers.

The writing of ancient history consists chiefly in the careful weighing of conflicting probabilities; and in this case, although the second theory I have mentioned seems to carry a greater weight of evidence than either of the others, it is impossible to determine absolutely which of the three is correct. The earliest positive evidence we possess as to the Syrian Christians is that of Cosmas, an Alexandrian merchant, called from his travels Indicopleustes. He visited Malabar in the sixth century, and affirms the existence of a flourishing Christian Church under a bishop who came from Persia, where he was ordained. This is supported by the testimony of the "Kerul Oodputtee" where there is mention made of two Syrian or Chaldean ecclesiastics named Mar Sabro and Mar Brodt, at Coulan, about a hundred years after the foundation of that city. They were welcomed by the Rajah, and the church which they built was still in existence when Pedro Alvarez Cabral first visited Coulan to establish Portuguese commerce in India. The grants and privileges which they received from the Rajah were engraved on copper plates to which a curious history is attached. They were shown in the sixteenth century to Archbishop Menezes at Tevalacare, and after lying hidden for two centuries they were recovered in 1806 by Lieutenant-Colonel Macaulay, and copper-plate facsimiles were placed in the University Library at Cambridge, by Dr. Buchanan.

We now arrive at the period when the infant Church is brought into contact both with the civil power and with Mohammedanism; and it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that the firm footing on which it was established, as well as the prosperity it now began to enjoy, were due in no small degree to the Episcopal form of government under which it was organized. In the ninth century the district of Malabar was ruled by an aristocratic form of government, under various castes of Brahmins. These obtained their power from a division of the whole territory into lots by a king named

Shermanoo Permaloo, who appears to have acquired sovereignty by rebelling against the king by whom he had been appointed viceroy. Among the Malayalim the highest caste are the Namboory Brahmins, whose privilege it was to attend and perform the religious services in the temples. The second caste consists of the Nairs, who were the military tribe; and in the hands of these two chief divisions almost all important functions were vested.

It is said that the introduction of Mohammedanisn into South India was accomplished by the conversion of this king, Shermanoo Permaloo; but all accounts agree in representing him as not only tolerant, but favourably disposed towards the Christians. Under his auspices they attained considerable power. The numbers of the immediate descendants of Mar Thomas were augmented by accessions from the Christians of the Coromandel Coast, who had fled, under the stress of persecution, to the mountainous districts. Encouraged by the government of Shermanoo Permaloo, these settled in the interior of Cochin, Cranganore, and Travancore, and soon became identified with the original St. Thomé Christians, and shared their privileges. The whole body of Christians enjoyed the same rank as the Nairs, and were in every respect on a social equality with that caste. Gradually they became independent of the heathen authorities; after a time they were left to the government of their own Bishops in civil as well as ecclesiastical matters; and finally, with less of gratitude than of enterprise, they shook off the yoke of their heathen rulers, and elected a king of their own nation. The first to bear that dignity was Baliartes, who took the title of Rajah of the Christians of St. Thomas. But this state of independence did not last very long. The last of the independent Rajahs, having no children of his own, adopted the Rajah of Diamper for his heir. This man was a heathen, and he succeeded to all the regal power over the Christians of South India. Afterwards, by a similar adoption, they passed under the jurisdiction of the Rajah of Cochin, to whom they were subject when the Portuguese reached India. In spite, however, of the fact that the kingly power was in the hands of a heathen, the Syrian Christians still enjoyed a large proportion of their ancient privileges. They were still practically governed by their Bishop in matters civil as well as ecclesiastical; and even in the territories of neighbouring rulers their presence was welcomed, since it was recognised that their industrious habits, displayed chiefly in the cultivation of the pepper-vine, contributed largely to the general prosperity of the state.

We now possess scarcely any records of the internal history of the Church during this period of prosperity. The Indian

trade fell into the hands of the Venetian, Genevese, and Florentine merchants successively; but, meanwhile, no attempt was made to effect the conversion of the Malayalim or the Syrians to the Roman Catholic faith.

The first adventurer who was instrumental in bringing the St. Thomé Christians under the notice of Europe was Pedro Alvarez Cabral, who landed at Cranganore, a town on the Malabar coast, between Calicut and Cochin, and took back with him to Portugal two brothers, Matthias and Joseph, members of the Church at Cranganore. Soon after their arrival at Lisbon Matthias, the elder, died, and of Joseph nothing further is known than that he visited Rome and Venice, and then, returning to Portugal, sailed to his native land.[1]

In the year 1502 Vasco de Gama, Admiral of the King of Portugal, arrived at Cochin with his fleet. The St. Thomé Christians having ascertained that he was a representative of a Christian monarch, sent deputies begging De Gama to take them under his protection, at the same time presenting him with a staff of wood painted with vermilion, mounted at each end with silver, and ornamented with three bells. This, they told him, had been the sceptre of their kings, the last of whom had lately died. The Admiral welcomed the deputation and dismissed them with many fair promises, but at present he could give them no material assistance.

Here was the first point of contact between the Syrian Church of Malabar on the one hand, and Portuguese religion and civilization on the other. It was an occasion full of great possibilities for the Syrians. Doubtless they looked forward with eager anticipation to an era of renewed prosperity. They were hoping great things from the Portuguese alliance, but they were too sanguine, too trustful.

As we look back on the history of the Syrian Church during the three centuries following this visit, we see clearly enough that the year 1502 marked the commencement of an age of trouble and decay. Hitherto the freedom of conscience enjoyed by these people had fostered in them habits of industry, sobriety, and chastity, quite exceptional among the races of South India, and as a result they had attained a position of considerable power. Henceforth another influence was at work in their midst. With the Portuguese came the Jesuits, with the Jesuits the Inquisition, with the Jesuits and the Inquisition came misery, strife, and ruin.

Before entering more fully on the history of the sixteenth

[1] A description of Joseph's travels was published in Latin under the title of "Voyages of Joseph the Indian."

century, it will be interesting to ascertain what was the condition of the Syrian Christians when first the Portuguese became acquainted with them. Politically their influence was, as we have seen, peculiarly great. Their obligations to their Pagan rulers were represented merely by the payment of tribute, and the equipment of a contingent of troops in time of war. The area occupied by them extended far beyond their present limits. Now chiefly confined to the states of Travancore and Cochin, they then had churches all over the Malabar country, the headquarters of their Bishop being at Angamalé. Of the precise numbers of the population living under the jurisdiction of the Bishop we have no record, but the numerous and magnificent ruins of Christian places of worship still remaining clearly indicate the existence of a large and wealthy community; and we are told that within the dominions of the Rajahs of Cochin and Travancore alone their churches numbered at least one hundred and ten.[1] Meanwhile, all accounts agree in describing the Christians themselves as a race far superior to their neighbours in mental, moral, and physical development. Physically they were, as a rule, tall, well built, and rather lighter in colour than the Indians. The Portuguese historians record that they bore a high character for courtesy and filial affection. They were strongly gifted with the faculty of wonder, listening eagerly to any strange or novel story. In spite of the heat of the climate, and the licentious customs of the country, they maintained a chaste and simple mode of life. Although the men always carried weapons, quarrels were rare and murders still fewer among them. On entering a church they deposited their arms in the porch, resuming them as they passed out. From eight years of age until twenty-eight the men were trained to the use of arms; and "the more Christians a Pagan prince had in his dominions the more was he feared and respected by his neighbours." In their commercial dealings they displayed great fidelity and honesty. They were charitable, kind to their slaves, and particularly sober. For criminal offences they were answerable to their Pagan rulers, but in civil affairs they were under the jurisdiction of their Bishop, who, with his Archdeacon, decided all their differences in his character of Judge and Pastor. Such is the picture of the St. Thomé Christians drawn for us by the Portuguese historian Gouvea, and the Italian Da Siena, both of them Roman Catholics, and both unlikely to dress their subject in colours brighter than it deserves.

As to their theological position, it appears to be certain that

[1] Paper by F. Wrede, Asiatic Researches, vol. vii.

when the Portuguese began to take cognizance of the teaching and discipline of the Church of Malabar, they found Nestorianism so fully established, that the time could not be remembered when any other doctrine had been taught. The ecclesiastical organization was completed in the persons of a Bishop, who derived his authority from the Patriarch of Mosul, and a body of Catanars, including both priests and deacons, whose duty it was to study and expound to the people the Syriac writings.

Such was the position of the Syrian Church at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Hitherto they had held no intercourse with their Western fellow-religionists, and their first experience could scarcely have prepared them for the sequel. In 1542-51 their country was visited by the great "Apostle of India," Francis Xavier. Whatever estimate we may form of the permanent value of Xavier's work, there can at least be no doubt that his earnest zeal and devotion were as far as possible removed from the persecuting vigour of subsequent Romish envoys. Xavier's mission did not exert any important influence on the Syrian Christians; but in 1545 more decided measures were taken. In that year Father Vincent, a monk of the Franciscan Order, was sent to inquire into the state of the Church, and, if possible, to induce the Christians to acknowledge the Papal supremacy. He was at first well received; but, when the real object of his mission became apparent, the people refused to entertain his advances. He then had recourse to the Viceroy of India, with whose permission he established a college at Cranganore, where he hoped to train Indian youths in the literature and rites of the Roman Church. His plans in that direction were, however, doomed to disappointment. Although a supply of youths was forthcoming, they had no sooner been fitted for their work than the people, regarding them as apostates, refused to allow them to perform ministerial functions, or even to enter the churches.

The efforts of the Franciscans having failed, the Jesuits took the matter in hand. At first they tried persuasive measures. A college was established at Vaipicotta, one league from Cranganore, under Antonio Guedes Morales, and the Syrian youths were now allowed to retain the language and dress of the Catanars. But, notwithstanding the most careful instruction, the students were no sooner ordained than they refused absolutely to preach against their ancient prelates, and the Jesuits often experienced the chagrin of hearing them, even in their own college, maintain their former opinions, and make mention of the Patriarch of Babylon in their prayers. An attempt was next made to remove the Syrian Bishop, Mar Joseph. He was accused of Nestorianism, and despatched to Portugal, with a

request that he might be forwarded to Rome and never sent back. In Portugal, however, he so far succeeded in ingratiating himself with the Queen Regent and the Inquisitor-General, that, having promised to purge his diocese of all former errors, and to bring it into obedience to the Church of Rome, he was allowed to return to India with letters of recommendation from the Queen to the Viceroy and the Archbishop of Goa. As soon as Mar Joseph found himself among his own people he resumed his former doctrines. In the end he was seized by the Jesuits and transported to Rome, where he died. The removal of Mar Joseph, however, did not tend to tranquillize matters in Malabar. At the first appearance of danger another Bishop, Mar Abraham, was sent from Babylon, who adopted the tactics of his predecessor. He was sent to Rome, abjured his errors there, repeated his abjuration whilst he was in the power of the Jesuits at Goa, and disregarded it as soon as he felt safe among his own people. Finding that his health was failing, Mar Abraham applied to his Patriarch for a coadjutor, and in consequence Mar Simeon, a young priest, was appointed. Soon, however, serious dissensions arose between the two Bishops, which were at length terminated by the capture of the younger by the Jesuits. Still Mar Abraham was at large, and at length, in 1595, Don Alexis de Menezes, Archbishop of Goa, was instructed by the Pope, Clement VIII., to make a strict inquiry into the life, morals, and doctrine of the Bishop, and, if he should be found guilty, to arrest him and conduct him to Goa, there to await the final decision of the Holy See. In the meantime Menezes was to appoint an Apostolical Vicar to the diocese, and was carefully to exclude any prelate not sent from Rome.

Menezes lost no time in carrying out the commands of the Pope, but Mar Abraham retired to Angamalé, to which town the Portuguese could not gain access, and, whilst negotiations were still pending, he died, leaving his Archdeacon George as his representative. On the death of the Bishop, Menezes appointed a Jesuit named Francisco Roz, a man of virtue, learning, and prudence, well versed in the Syriac and Malabar languages, together with the chief of the Jesuit College at Vaipicotta, to assist the Archdeacon George in his office of Vicar-General. George was compelled to subscribe a profession of faith which, after the manner of his race, he speedily repudiated. This duplicity exasperated Menezes to such a degree, that, notwithstanding that the country was disturbed by war, he resolved at all hazards to proceed in person to the Serra, and to reduce by his power and presence, not only the Archdeacon, but also all his clergy, into obedience to the Pope. This was an energetic and politic step. If the Jesuits could

once establish a firm hold on the general body of the Church, the battle was won.

Menezes began his visitation of the diocese in 1599. With some difficulty he induced the Archdeacon to meet him at Cochin; but so great was the distrust felt towards the Roman ecclesiastic, and so high the estimation in which the Archdeacon was held by the Christians, that the powerful chieftains, or "panicals" of the diocese, constantly provided him with large escorts of well-armed men. From Cochin the *cortège* repaired to Vaipicotta. Here Menezes, who was the first to arrive, administered confirmation, a sacrament hitherto unknown to the Syrians. On the arrival of the Archdeacon, sentence of excommunication was pronounced against all persons who, in the diocese of Angamalé, should dare to give to the Patriarch of Babylon the title of Universal Pastor of the Catholic Church, a title which belonged solely to the Roman Pontiff. This document naturally produced great consternation amongst the St. Thomé Christians, but Menezes was not without some success in persuading a few of the Catanars to adopt his views. After leaving Vaipicotta, the Roman envoy visited many of the churches in the diocese, performing mass, administering the sacraments, and enjoining auricular confession. He was also careful to engage the support of the Ranee and of the Rajah of Cochin. The former he bribed, the latter he bullied, into complaisance. The first place in which he met with any considerable success was Carturté, a town to the east of Calicut. Here the people received his ministrations, and he could at length boast of having procured the conversion of the whole population, as well as that of some neighbouring villages. But this, after all, was a very meagre result, and accordingly he determined on making a decisive effort on a large scale. A synod was ordered to assemble at Diamper, at which the whole question of doctrinal and ecclesiastical difficulties should be discussed.

The struggle between the Roman Catholic emissaries and the Syrian ecclesiastics had now reached its culminating point. A long series of faithless negotiations had been carried on, in which both parties appear to have set aside considerations of truth and honour. The Syrian Archdeacon and his flock, far from resting their action on the inherent justice of their cause, had had recourse to tricks and falsehoods as detestable as those by means of which the Papist missionaries had striven to gain a firm hold on their Church. And, bearing in mind the personal character of the leaders of either party, the issue could not be doubtful. Menezes, in all his proceedings, had constantly displayed a vigour and determination, a recklessness in the means he employed, and a devotion to one settled object,

which were sure to carry the day against an opponent so weak and prevaricating as the Archdeacon George. The result of this momentous Synod was therefore the temporary subjugation of the whole, and a permanent enthralment of a part, of the Church of Malabar.

The decrees of the Synod furnish the best evidence as to the tenets of the Syrian Church at that time. The Syrians, whilst holding the doctrines of the Atonement, the necessity of a new Birth, and the Trinity in Unity, were accused of the following "heretical" opinions: They rejected the Supremacy of the Pope; denied the doctrine of Transubstantiation, admitting only the spiritual presence of Christ in the Sacrament; they condemned the adoration of images; knew nothing of the intercession of saints; did not believe in Purgatory, nor in masses and prayers for the dead; they made no use of the holy oil in Baptism; had no knowledge of Extreme Unction nor of Auricular Confession; they allowed the clergy to marry; held only two orders, viz., Priests and Deacons, their Bishops being called Metropolitans or Metrans rather as a name of dignity than as forming a distinct Order; they consecrated the elements at the Holy Communion with prayer, believing that without the operation of the Holy Ghost the words of the priest were of no avail; they administered in both kinds; admitted members of other Churches to Holy Communion; in all questions of doctrine they appealed to the authority of the Holy Scriptures as decisive; and they held three Sacraments, viz., Baptism, the Holy Communion, and Holy Orders.[1] These doctrines and practices were severally and collectively condemned, conformity to the Canons of the Council of Trent was enjoined, the Syrian books were ordered to be surrendered for destruction or correction as the Jesuits might determine, and submission to the Inquisition was commanded. A solemn *Te Deum* brought the Synod to a close on June 26, 1599.[2]

The history of the next fifty years presents few points of interest. The Episcopal dignity was held by a succession of ecclesiastics belonging to the Society of Jesus. They forced on the Syrians the use of the Latin language, thus preventing the participation of the people in public worship, and altogether they behaved with intolerable pride and arrogance. The Christians sent frequent complaints to Rome without obtaining the least redress. At length, in 1656, they resolved to

[1] See appendix A, vol. ii. of "Hough's Christianity in India."

[2] Menezes promptly started on a second visitation of the diocese, returning to Goa in November, after an absence of ten months. To his determined energy was due the subjugation of the whole region to Rome. We cannot but mourn for the consequences that followed his success. From 1599 dates the decadence of the Syrian Church.

renounce the domination of the Roman Prelate named Don Garzia, and to choose a bishop of their own. They chose as their representative Thomas the Archdeacon, but, in order that they might obtain a bishop whose ordination should be unquestionable, they wrote simultaneously to their ancient Patriarch at Mosul, to the Patriarch of the Copts in Egypt, and of the Jacobites in Syria, asking of each that a bishop might be sent without delay. At the time when these letters arrived, Attalla, a former Bishop of the Syrian Church, was residing with the Patriarch of the Copts at Cairo, and he was selected to fill the vacant post. He travelled first to Mosul, obtained recommendatory letters from the Patriarch there, and then went on to India. The agents of the Jesuits had meantime taken alarm; the unfortunate Attalla was arrested, condemned by the Inquisition, and executed at Goa. When his arrest became known, the Syrians assembled a considerable force and marched on Metanger, near Cochin, with a view to obtaining possession of the person of Don Garzia. Failing in their design, they took an oath to drive every Jesuit out of the country, and to submit to no authority but that of their own Archdeacon; and then, finding that there was no hope of foreign help, they irregularly consecrated the Archdeacon Thomas at the hands of twelve Catanars.

Meanwhile the task of reducing the recalcitrant Syrians to obedience was entrusted to four Carmelite missionaries. After many attempts two of these men gave up the task and returned to Rome, leaving Père Hyacinthe de St. Vincent and Père Marcell de St. Ives to do what they could. The efforts of these envoys resulted in almost total failure, although the biographer of Hyacinthe de St. Vincent informs us that "what he could not accomplish by the voice of persuasion he effected by force;" and of his plan of operations the same authority says that "he employed with advantage the power of the native princes, so that by imprisonment, by sequestration of property, and by other similar expedients, he gained many souls, and brought back the whole country into the right way"!

The record of the next few years is nothing but a tale of anarchy and confusion. The Jesuits and the Carmelites plotted against each other, and both against the Syrians, and either party made free use of the temporal power whenever the native princes favoured their cause.

But another disturbing element now asserted itself. The Dutch were gradually establishing themselves in Malabar, and in 1663 the death-blow was given to the Portuguese power in India by the surrender of Cochin. One of the first acts of the Dutch authorities was to banish from the coast all European

monks; but although the Syrians were thus protected against their most formidable enemies, they were so far left to their own resources that matters gradually became worse. The effect of two hundred years of continual depression and disturbance shewed itself, and spiritual life was reduced to a very low ebb indeed in Malabar. During the eighteenth century sundry efforts were made to bring about some kind of reformation. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, in concert with the Danish missionaries, more than once opened negotiations with the Syrian clergy, but all attempts to arouse them proved unavailing. About 1720 there appear to have been no less than three rival Bishops in the diocese, representing the Nestorian, the Jacobite, and the Romanist sections of the Church respectively; but from that date to the close of the century we have very little detailed information as to the affairs of the Church.

Such was the result of the action of the Romish priests in Malabar. They found the Syrian Church wealthy, vigorous, and powerful; they left it poor, spiritless, and despised. They found the Christians living in peace, holding firmly the fundamental doctrines of the faith, honest and free in their convictions; they left them in a state of anarchy, uncertain what they ought to believe, forbidden to worship God in their native tongue, and unable to use any other. Thus the influence of those who came to bring light and truth was powerful only in introducing darkness and strife. It is a pitiful picture; but after all, the result might well have been anticipated.

With the entrance of the nineteenth century, the general awakening of England to a sense of the responsibilities entailed upon her by the religious needs of her new Indian Empire began to make itself felt.[1] The travels and researches of Dr. Claudius Buchanan stirred the hearts of many. Gradually the eloquence and determination of the men who composed the celebrated Clapham Council forced on the country the conviction that it was an imperative duty, as well as the wisest policy, to remove those restrictions which had hitherto been laid upon all efforts at evangelization in India.

Dr. Buchanan's researches led him to the conclusion that it might be possible and desirable to bring about a union between the Syrian Church and the Church of England. The accounts of his travels in Travancore are singularly interesting. He tells us that in the churches and in the people there was an air of fallen greatness. One of the Catanars said to him,

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[1] See the account of the negotiations and the war of pamphlets in Kaye's "History of Christianity in India;" also "Church and State in India," in *British Quarterly Review*, No. cxxiii.

"We are in a degenerate state compared with our forefathers. About three hundred years ago an enemy came from the West bearing the name of Christ, but armed with the Inquisition, and compelled us to seek the protection of the native princes. And the native princes have kept us in a state of depression ever since. They indeed recognise our ancient personal privileges, for we rank in general next to the Nairs, the nobility of the country; but they have encroached by degrees on our property, until we have been reduced to the humble state in which you find us."[1] The number of copies of the sacred Scriptures existing in the country was very small and constantly diminishing, many of the Catanars having never so much as seen a copy of the New Testament; and Dr. Buchanan was assured that the greatest blessing the English Church could bestow on them would be the Bible, and the next greatest "some freedom and personal consequence as a people." While visiting the residence of the Metran, Dr. Buchanan laid before this dignitary the advantages that would accrue from a formal union with the Church of England. The proposition was favourably received, and a written answer was returned by the Metran, after consultation with his clergy, to the effect "That a union with the English Church, or at least such a connection as should appear to both Churches practical and expedient, would be a happy event, and favourable to the advancement of religion in India." In 1816, the Church Missionary Society sent the Rev. T. Norton to Allepie, about forty miles to the north of Cochin; and shortly afterwards a college was established by the help of Major Munro, the British Resident at Cottayam, in which the Catanars might obtain a competent education. But the projected union was found to be impossible. Bishop Wilson,[2] on visiting the neighbourhood in 1835, found that the Metran had introduced grave errors. He admitted to ordination boys of twelve and fourteen, conferred Holy Orders for money, and encouraged prayers for the dead. Bishop Wilson did all that was possible to induce reform, but without any solid result, and in the end it was clear that Dr. Buchanan's plan could not be carried out. The explanation of the failure seems to have been that the Syrian ecclesiastics, reduced to great poverty, could not be taught to act on any higher motive than the desire for pecuniary advantage. Their deplorable ignorance produced its natural result in bitter

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[1] See "Christian Researches in Asia respecting the Syrians." About the time of Dr. Buchanan's visit other efforts were made for the benefit of the Syrians by M. Ringletaube, under the auspices of the London Missionary Society, in 1806.

[2] See Bateman's "Life of Bishop Wilson," vol. ii.

prejudice and doctrinal errors. The committee of the Church Missionary Society were obliged to convey to the missionaries their decided judgment that the Syrians should be brought back to their own ancient and primitive worship and discipline, rather than be induced to adopt the discipline and Liturgy of the English Church.

But although any formal union has been found to be impracticable, the work of the English missionaries has not been lacking in the most valuable results. The rupture in 1837 did not arouse any feeling of hostility between the Syrians and the missionaries. Some thousands of Syrians have joined the Church of England, and a new era of activity has commenced among those who still adhere to their ancient Church. The Church Missionary Society have undoubtedly acted with great wisdom in their dealings in Travancore. Although they have found it impossible to refuse to permit Syrians to leave their own body for the Church of England at their own desire, yet any attempt at proselytizing has been consistently discouraged. Their policy has been rather to encourage the work of reformation from within the Syrian Church itself, than to force a reform upon it from outside, and the result of this policy has been highly satisfactory. The Church Missionary Society has several stations within and around Travancore, and the influence exerted on the Syrian Church by the noble example of the English missionaries has been very striking.[1] The missionaries are frequently invited to preach in Syrian churches, Syrian youths study in the schools under the Society's auspices, for the examination at the Madras University, and in the mission schools the children of Syrians are educated in large numbers.

Meanwhile a vigorous reforming party has arisen among the Syrians themselves. The movement began in 1873, under Mar Athanasius, and although serious divisions have not been lacking from time to time, the progress made has been on the whole very considerable. In 1875 a curious schism commenced. A sect known as "The Six Years' Party" was formed, the leaders of which pretended to have received a Divine revelation to the effect that the second Advent of Christ would take place in six years. This sect indulged in many extravagances, and was joined by nearly five thousand Syrians. The schism is now, however, practically at an end. The six years'

[1] The work of the Rev. H. Baker and the Rev. R. H. Maddox deserves special mention. Writing in 1872, the Rev. R. H. Maddox says, "I doubt whether the history of the Reformation in England during twenty years would give more decided signs of progress and enlightenment, than the history of the last twenty years in reference to the Reformation in this Syrian Church discloses." (Church Missionary Society Report.)

period matured on October 2nd, 1881, and the failure of the prediction had its natural result. The reforming zeal of Mar Athanasius stirred up the enmity of some of the Catanars and of the Patriarch. The latter accordingly visited the diocese in 1875, and succeeded in greatly hampering the efforts of Mar Athanasius. He divided the whole district into six dioceses, appointed a metran for each, and left them to win possession or not as they were able. But, in spite of these and other hostile measures, signs are not lacking that the resuscitation of this ancient Church is real and active. The Syrians have now the Bible in their own language, there is a growing desire that the young especially should be instructed in Christian principles, and it is not, perhaps, too much to hope that, under Divine guidance, the little spark of truth which has slumbered awhile in this dark corner of India has only been waiting the appointed time when its brightness shall once more "give light to them that sit in darkness." As far as numbers are concerned, their position is far better than it was. A recent census gives the following figures as representing the population of the State of Travancore. Mohammedans and Hindus, 1,840,222; Syrian Christians, 300,000; Romanists, 109,000; other Protestants, 57,874. In Cochin there were at the same date, of Mohammedans and Hindus, 460,000; Romanists, 100,000; and Syrians, about 40,000.

These results are satisfactory, but it is a question of considerable importance whether in the end some means should not be sought for uniting, under the same general control, the affairs of the Syrian Church and the other Protestant bodies. At present, matters do not seem to be ripe for any such action. The Syrian Christians, although emancipated from Rome, are far from being free from errors in doctrine, and the wisest course undoubtedly will be to continue to encourage the internal work of reformation. So long as this continues, although the progress may be slow, it will surely be unwise to weaken the hands of the reforming party by attracting from their Church the most able and zealous of their number. But in the future we may, perhaps, look forward with hope and expectation to a time when the case will be different. The extension of the system of Native Church Councils must, of course, be gradual; but it may, by-and-by, be worth considering whether some application of that system cannot be made to the case of the Syrian Church, so as to unite them more or less closely with the other Protestant Christians of Southern India.

Whether any such scheme can ever be carried into execution or not is a matter for future decision. For the present we can only observe carefully the progress of events, earnestly hoping that the close of a long history of painful suffering, of weary

waiting, and of impending ruin, may prove to be the commencement of a period of truer service and warmer zeal, of greater prosperity and wider influence, on the part of the Syrian Church, than she has ever yet known.

R. E. JOHNSTON.

ART. II.—THE PIONEER OF THE OVERLAND ROUTE.

THE movement for the erection of a national monument to Thomas Waghorn, Lieutenant R.N., has now assumed a definite shape. Set on foot by the Court Leet of Chatham, some months ago, it has very properly been made national. It is not only Chatham, his birthplace, but England, Europe, and the civilised kingdoms of the Eastern and the Western worlds that owe a debt of gratitude to the Pioneer of the Overland Route. M. de Lesseps has again and again acknowledged his indebtedness to Waghorn for the idea which resulted in the Suez Canal; and that one of our own countrymen should have discovered more than fifty years ago the importance of our possessing this speedier means of communication with India, instead of the long and tedious voyage round the Cape of Good Hope, is certainly a satisfactory fact; but it is by no means so satisfactory that there should have been so little national notice taken of it, until this indefatigable traveller has been thirty-four years in the grave. It is impossible to plead in satisfaction the Civil List Pension of £200 per annum, which was granted to him so grudgingly and tardily that he only lived to receive one quarter's payment. His widow, too, was allowed (since his pension died with him), in consideration of her husband's "eminent services," the annual bounty of £25, which was afterwards raised, in consequence of a public outcry, and because of her "extreme destitution," by another of £15; and the India House also gave her a pension of £50 per annum. True, his other relatives subsequently received pittances such as those which the bounty of the nation bestows in return for heroism and distinction, and which, by a curious rule of contrarieties, seem to vary inversely with the service rendered. Thus, upon his widow's death in 1856, his aged mother received a pension of £50, and this was upon her death increased to £75, which was divided amongst his three sisters. But that Thomas Waghorn, who saved both the national exchequer and the commercial communities of England millions, by opening up a new line of communication with the East, and many of