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COPY OF A LETTER FROM THE REV. J. E.  
MARKS, TO CHARLES RAIKES, Esq., C.S.I.

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CLERGY HOUSE,

MANDALAY, BURMA,

20th Aug., 1873.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your kind letter reached me last evening, and I hasten to reply, lest my answer should reach you too late to be of any service to you. Indeed, I dare not flatter myself that I can say much which you do not already know. My experience has been entirely in Burma, and of course of this country only I can speak. Still as you are so good as to ask me, I feel bound to reply to the best of my poor ability.

I hope that you have also written to other Missionaries, so that my reply, with theirs, will give you what you need.

I would talk then of (1) the Aim, (2) Machinery, (3) Sources of support, (4), Prospect of success of the Burma Missions of the S.P.G.

1. The aim is to Christianize and civilize the people of this country. Christianity and civilization we believe to be intimately bound up together. The religion which we endeavour to supersede is Buddhism—a system of philosophy rather than a faith—a system which speaks of God in all things, yet denies his personal existence, and which is without hope except of ultimate annihilation. Refinements upon this system there are amongst those who, like Plato of old, rise to higher conceptions of the soul's immortality, and amongst those who may have come into contact with western teaching (which without making absolute converts, has yet left its mark in their mode of speech and thought regarding God and eternity), yet as regards the immense mass of Buddhists their religion cannot be otherwise described than as "having no hope, without God in the world." It is the religion of practical Atheism—"the religion of despair." To its victims we come to offer the promises and privileges of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." Whilst fully acknowledging all that is excellent in the morality, and wise in the teachings of Gañtāmā—we endeavour to show the only way

that God has set forth for man's redemption and for his happiness here and hereafter.

We are met by a religion which is admirably adapted to the people by whom it is professed. It suits them marvelously. Destroying caste it puts all men on a level, sits lightly and yet enters intimately into all their social relations. It gives no fear in death, if it inspires no hope—gives an antidote to the troubles of life—by declaring this to be fate, and puts even the lowest peasant who may enter the priesthood on an equality with, or higher than, the king on his throne. I have seen hpoongyees or Buddhist yellow-robed priests stand before the King of Burma, whilst his own sons and the principal Ministers of State were crouching and kneeling with covered faces before him. Gratitude is unknown to Buddhism: *e.g.*, *A* is in trouble. *B* lends or gives him £10. *B* gains *merit* (kuthòl) for this—therefore *B* the giver or lender is under an obligation to *A* the recipient for allowing him *B* to get merit through him *A*, and thus, there is no word for “Thank you” in the language. Nor is there for *Conscience*.

We aim at putting the holy teachings of Christianity in the place of this. We do not underrate the difficulty. Even in the smallest domestic or social matter the Burmese have an enormous share of Oriental conservatism. The present King has frequently told me that he dreads the disgrace of being handed down to history as “the King who broke the customs;” though he personally is an enlightened man, and I believe wishes to do what is right. *Tōnzǎn* or custom is of equal authority with religion, and it is the last thing urged by every disputant, “You may be right according to your knowledge and thoughts, but it is not “Burmese Custom.” By this custom *every male* enters the monastery as a “*religious*” for a longer or shorter period of his life, and during this time, with shaven head and yellow robe and a religious name, he is dead to the world and an object of reverence. The King the other day assured me that in and around Mandalay there are 20,000 such now—the manhood of the country, which (Upper Burma) numbers barely 3,000,000, thus withdrawn from all social duties.

True civilization, which is based on Christianity, by teaching relative and social obligations, will, we believe, remedy much of these abuses.

The present civilization of the Burmans (for civilized they must be considered in contrast to the Shans, Kakhyns, Khins, Tounghthoos, and Kärenfs around them), is stagnant, and has been so for generations past.

Their devotion to Buddhism, its traditions and customs, is threatening the Burmese with extinction as a nation. Everywhere they are being superseded by Europeans, Jews, Moguls, Chinamen, and even Shans. In Mandalay itself the commerce of the country is rapidly passing into the hands of foreigners, against whom Burmans cannot hold their own. And this is regretted by all Europeans in the country, for in spite of national faults the Burmese must be liked by us. They have been not inaptly called the "Irish of the East."

(2.) To effect this vast and noble object—the conversion to Christianity of the Burmese nation, the S.P.G., the only Church society at work, has had its missions in the two Southern divisions of British Burma, *i.e.*, Pegu and Tenneserim, for 18 years. During this time she has sent out altogether ten clergymen, two schoolmasters, and five schoolmistresses. There are now at work in Lower Burmah (British territory) three clergymen, one schoolmaster, and three schoolmistresses.

Of the ten clergymen, four are in Burma now; three are in England, one on furlough, two permanently; two are in India (not with the society); one died in Moulmein.

Of the three schoolmasters, one died in Burma, having left S.P.G.; one has taken Government service; one is still in S.P.G. employ.

Of five schoolmistresses, two are married to clergymen, and three are still at work.

Our efforts have hitherto been largely educational. Seeing the difficulty, humanly speaking, in producing *real* converts amongst the adult followers of so ancient and widespread a religion as Buddhism, we judged that our best plan was to begin with the young, as the Buddhists themselves do. In almost every street in the cities and in every village there is a monastic school, free to all comers, supported by the laity, who deem such maintenance a work of merit, where all boys are taught the three R's *well*, though a long time is taken in the process, and are well grounded in the tenets and practices of the religion of their country. Strange to say the parents had no objection to entrust their children to our care. We might teach them our *bah-thah* (a word which includes language and religion) as much as we would, and parents were, after a time, willing to pay for such tuition. Accordingly we established S.P.G. Mission Schools for boys and girls in Rangoon and Thyetmyo, and for boys only in *Moulmein*, *Rangoon*, *Puzzoondoung*, and *Kyeemindine* (the two latter suburbs of Rangoon), *Zelloon*, *Henzadeh*, *Myan Oung*, and *Thyetmyo* on the Irrawaddy, and now in *Mandalay*, the capital of Burma Proper. These Schools have all been and

are worked under the immediate supervision of the ordained Missionaries, and the head teacher in all cases has been a Christian—generally one of our own converts. We never allow the mockery of setting a heathen teacher to teach Christianity. The Schools thrive in proportion as they are under the superintendence and care of the European Missionary. Native teachers, however conscientious and however well they work under surveillance, cannot act alone. They need, and, I venture to think, for a generation or two will need, to be *kept up to it*. Eventually, I believe, they will stand alone.

In a Mission School to every boy every day should Christian instruction be imparted. Otherwise it is not fulfilling its *raison d'être*, and is standing in the way of the propagation of the Gospel. The mode of imparting religious knowledge, the amount of truth which it is desirable to communicate to young heathen children, and such like questions, are, I venture to think, best disposed of by the earnest and careful teacher in his school. I never yet have been *able* to bind myself by any rule, for in the same class, boys with different capacities, different receptiveness, and different earnestness would utterly overthrow any rule. Generally, I try to avoid preaching or teaching against Buddhism, preferring to preach Christianity in all its beauty and tenderness. Every day begins with the public reading by the Missionary of a select portion of one of the Gospels in Burmese and English, and then prayers in both languages. The Christian boys *only* are allowed to kneel, the non-Christians (until they are baptized) stand. The portion read is afterwards read again by the boys themselves, and then they are catechized therein, *i.e.*, the meaning is questioned into and questioned out of them, they themselves being encouraged to ask questions, a privilege of which they gladly avail themselves. Then come their other studies (secular), but with an endeavour to work in a spirit of Christian truth, diligence, and kindness. Then the teacher's visit to the boys' homes, his care for them in sickness and trouble, all point to a high motive for his work, and to *his* faith in his own religion.

Our Boarding Schools have been, and are, highly useful. The boys having no caste, we can easily board them, and thus, of course, they are far more under our influence than when they are with us for a few hours in the day, and are then withdrawn, when our teaching is ignored and forgotten.

But I must frankly state our difficulties and disappointments. No boys are better pupils than Burmans—loveable, diligent, kind, affectionate, and docile to a degree; they are



the nicest boys in the East. I have to-night, as I write, 63 boarders, of ages from 23 to 9. I have no European assistant, and they give me not the slightest trouble. They study from 6.30 to 8. Then (don't be shocked) they have quarter of an hour for a cheroot! and then all will go to bed as quietly (if not more so) as an English family. *But*, to use the expression of an American missionary, "They graduate too soon." They leave school before they are fit to do so. Coming to us often late in life, they seek only a smattering of English, and then leave. They know enough for the present needs of British Burma, and their salaries as clerks would not be greater if they were to stay longer. *Monoculus inter Cæcos* is not a greater man than the Burman lad who can copy an English letter. In this school in Mandalay I have in four years admitted 236 boys, of whom only 101 remain (though the circumstances of the school are exceptional).

In a letter on this subject recently to the Hon. Ashley Eden, the Chief Commissioner of British Burma, I described my colleagues and myself as men standing with a pot of paint and a brush, trying to colour a running stream. We are forever admitting and losing boys. The few only stay to give us and themselves a fair chance.

But this state of things will, in time, correct itself; and the establishment of Government schools and colleges will, by raising the standard of education in the province, correct this evil. Besides, I am already educating the sons of my former pupils, and we may safely reckon upon improved attendance, and more lengthened stay, for the second generation of pupils. I have always looked upon *good* girls' schools as likely to be of immense service in the missionary cause. The mistress should have her heart thoroughly in her work, and should *know the language as her own*.

3. *Sources of Support*.—As our work has been mainly educational, our sources of support have been (a) society's help, (b) Government grants, (c) pupils' fees, and (d) local contributions.

Society's help has been needed to pay outfit and passages of European clergymen, schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, and their salaries whilst in Burma. It was also needed in the early days of Moulmein and Rangoon schools, and it is still needed for the girls' schools of Prome and Rangoon. I may say here that the salaries of missionaries S.P.G. Burma are at a *minimum*, and are such as would be spurned by any English layman of education. There is not a missionary S.P.G. in Burma but could get twice as much pay to-morrow in a merchant's or Government office.

Government grants in aid of our educational work, through the kindness of General Sir A. Phayre and of General A. Fytche, C.S.I., successive Chief Commissioners of British Burma, have been large.

For our Moulmein School we got £200 per annum grant in aid.

„	Rangoon	„	300	„	„
„	Puzzoondoung	„	60	„	„
„	Zelloon	„	30	„	„
„	Myan Oung	„	60	„	„
„	Henzadeh	„	120	„	„
„	Thyetmyo	„	60	„	„
„	Orphan Home	„	120	„	„
„	Girls' School	„	120	„	„

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£1076

Several of these Schools, however, have recently been closed, amongst them Moulmein, TO MY DEEP REGRET. Government also gave building grants to

S. John's College, S.P.G., Rangoon	...	£2000
S. Mary's School, S.P.G., Girls, Rangoon	..	500
Henzadeh, S.P.G., Boys	... ..	100
Myan Oung	... ..	100
Thyetmyo, Boys	... ..	100

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£2800

To meet equal amounts otherwise raised.

C.—*Pupils' Fees*.—In all our Schools for boys we have charged R.1s., or 6d. a week. In Rangoon recently the first-class boys have paid R.2s., or 1s. a week. N.B. Money has far less purchasing power here than in any other part of India. A rupee is really barely worth a shilling. Boys pay for their food when they are boarders, and *all* buy their own books. Girls are free.

D.—*Local Contributions*.—These are in India generally very liberal, in Burma particularly so. I have never had to stand still for anything if I applied for local help. I do not think that this is sufficiently utilised in India. I believe that were stations more efficiently worked in this respect, the S.P.G. and C.M.S. might be greatly relieved as to India, and the mission rendered more effective. The poorest Indian subaltern will give one a rupee a month for the Mission. That is £1 4s. per annum and a guinea subscription at home is a very decent one for squire or merchant.

E.—Our Mission is too young for Church support from our native converts.

F.—But this leads me now to speak of our Mandalay Mission, and I will do so briefly, and avoid using the *I* capital too often.

In 1868 the King of Burma heard of my big school in Rangoon, and of those which in a few weeks I had established along the Irrawaddy. He wrote to me through one of his ministers, asking me to come and establish a similar school in his capital. By the advice and consent of the Bishop of Calcutta and Chief Commissioner (General Fytche) I came up, saw the King, we liked each other, he made grand promises which I believed. I went back after all preliminaries had been satisfactorily arranged, and returned in six months' time to find the School and Clergy House built, and the Boarding School and Church only awaiting my plans. The School was begun with a few boys, including the King's sons, ministers' sons, and my own boys from Rangoon. The King supported and paid for all, except my pay (which he would have done had I not believed it best that I should be independent). He now pays over R.800 (£80) per month, or nearly £1000 per annum, for the support of the School. His kindness to me is un-failing. There is not, nor has there ever been, the least interference with the Christian teaching in the School. The Princes read their Bibles in the Palace, and the King liked to hear them. Boys have been publicly baptised, and no word of discouragement has been spoken. The School is called in Burmese "The English Christian Royal School. A good number of the boys are my old pupils from British Burma. Only to-day a very poor lad arrived. He had worked his way up in a boat two months on the way, and with six lead pieces (value half-farthing) he arrived here starving to ask my aid now that he is an orphan. Of course, I shall ask His Majesty to let him be put on the foundation, and I fear not the result.

The Bishop of Calcutta thoroughly examined our School here a few days ago. In his report to the King, his lordship says, "I carefully examined this Royal School, and I can certify that it is a very good school, and that its tone and character are high. I have examined most of the schools over all India, and I can therefore speak with confidence on this matter. The pupils who have grown up and left it seem to be likely to be useful members of society. The School is a real benefit to His Majesty's subjects."

The King bears the whole expense of this Mission, except the salary of myself and an assistant master for some time, and it has not cost S.P.G. a penny.

Only just now the King paid £1500 for corrugated iron roofing for all the premises.

His personal kindness to me is great. He treats me with every distinction, and in the most punctilious court in the world I do as I like, and have ready access to the King when his own chief ministers of State cannot approach him. Why this is I can't say. May God give me grace and strength to use all my opportunities for His honour.

The church which has just been consecrated is the offering of the King to the English Church. It is called in Burmese "The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ." It is a really beautiful edifice. It is built of wood, with iron roofing, gutters, &c. It will hold 350 people. The carved work is grand and plentiful. When fully completed it will have cost a lac of rupees—£10,000.

Lastly, our prospects of success. We have chosen the plan least adapted to produce *immediate and appreciable* results, but the one, in my humble opinion, most likely by God's help to give us a thoroughly good nucleus for a Burmese Christian Church. We shall have *educated, grounded* Christians, able to give a reason for the hope that is in them. *Boys* who can face their schoolfellows of the same *public school*, and such, we thank God, are our present converts, not yet numerous, but annually increasing.

It is true that the main design of all Christian missionary work is to turn sinners "from darkness to light," and to add to the Church. But it is also true that the Gospel of the kingdom must be preached to all nations for a *witness unto them*. Such is our work. We do not neglect the distribution of the Bible and other books; we argue in monasteries and houses, we preach in church and village. But our main work is educational; and thirteen years' experience emboldens me to say that we are right. The Baptists and Roman Catholics *in their own reports* complain that we are right, and our daily experience now tells us so. Our Christian teachers to-day are our old pupils of a few years ago, some of which we had least hope of. I do believe that by God's help a Christian education to the youth of Burma is the *fulcrum* that shall lift the load of superstition and error from this country.

I beg that you will kindly pardon this long and ill-written letter, believing that most truly I had not time to re-arrange or re-write it. Crude as it is, and written *currente calamo*, I trust that it may be of some use.

I am, my dear Sir,

Most faithfully yours,

J. E. MARKS.

CHARLES RAIKES, Esq., C.S.I.













