



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### **Usage guidelines**

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

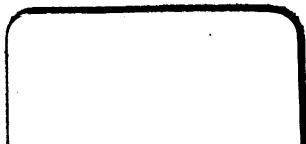
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### **About Google Book Search**

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

23 B 15



from Robert Cust to the  
Indian Institute Library 10/11/01

ESSAY

ON THE

NATIONAL CUSTOM OF BRITISH INDIA

SHOWN AS

CASTE, VARNA, OR JATI.

BY ROBERT NEEDHAM CUST,

*Honorary Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, Member of the Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society and Church Missionary Society, late Member of Her Majesty's Indian Civil Service.*

PART I.—CASTE IN THE WORLD.

*Lecture at the National Indian Association, 1879.*

PART II.—CASTE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

*Contribution to "Mission Life," 1881.*

LONDON:

WELLS GARDNER, DARTON & CO.,

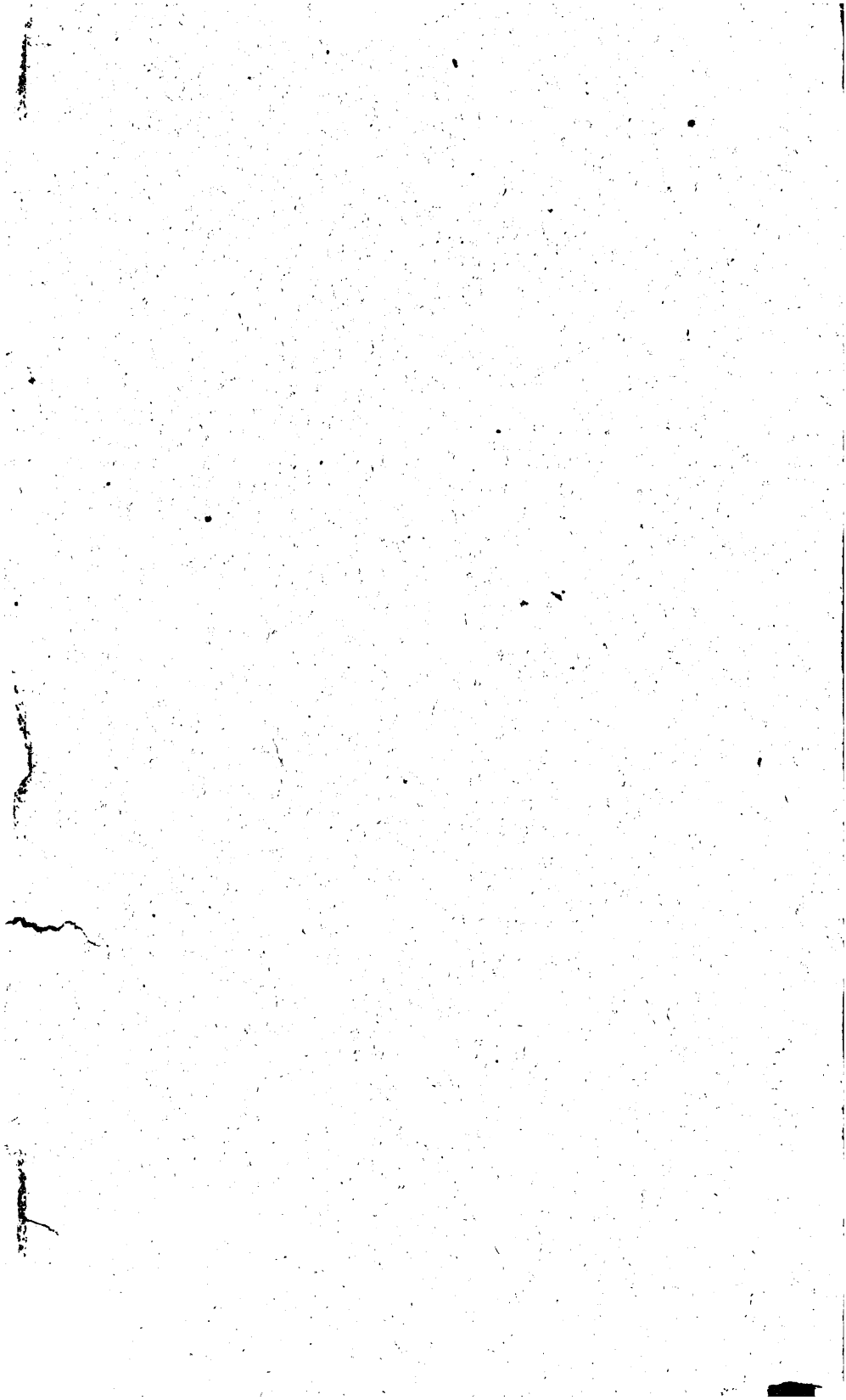
2, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS.

1881.

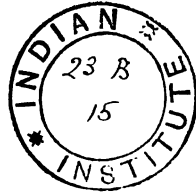
3B

15

PRICE SIXPENCE.



ESSAY



ON THE

NATIONAL CUSTOM OF BRITISH INDIA

KNOWN AS

CASTE, VARNA, OR JATI.

By ROBERT NEEDHAM CUST,

*Honorary Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, Member of the Committees of the British and Foreign Bible Society and Church Missionary Society, late Member of Her Majesty's Indian Civil Service.*

PART I.—CASTE IN THE WORLD,

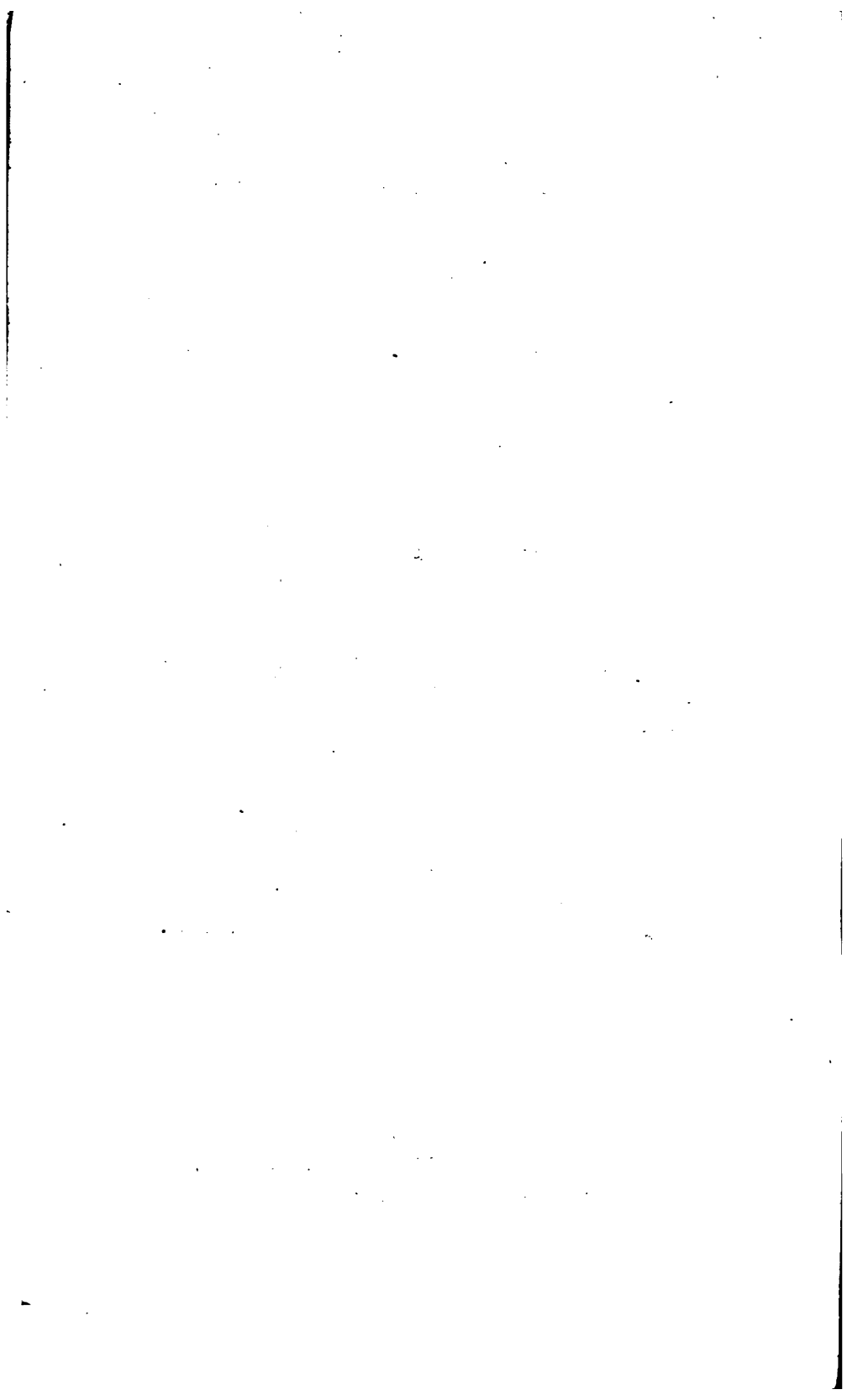
*Lecture at the National Indian Association, 1879.*

PART II.—CASTE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

*Contribution to "Mission Life," 1881.*

LONDON:  
WELLS GARDNER, DARTON & CO.,  
2, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS.

1881.



PART I.  
CASTE IN THE WORLD.

---

**C**ONSIDER myself fortunate in having the opportunity to bring this subject forward in an assembly presided over by you, Sir Arthur Hobhouse, for the following reasons. Those who, like myself, have spent their lives in India, have the reputation of being prejudiced in favour of the people; those who stay at home, sometimes from incorrect reports, conceive a feeling against them. You, sir, who had the privilege of taking mature English experience to India, and of bringing back Indian experience to England, are able to hold the scales fairly betwixt those, who know the people too well, and those who do not know them personally at all.

The subject of Caste is one of considerable importance. There exists unquestionably a social institution in British India, which is found nowhere else in such compact rigidity: it lays claim to considerable antiquity, and is a social phenomenon, which cannot be overlooked: it is proposed to examine the features of this institution.

It is of no practical advantage to discuss the origin of Caste. Of one thing there is no doubt, that it is not alluded to in the Rig Veda, as a social feature of the early Arian population. The Post Vedic Laws of Manu lay great stress upon Caste, but it is not clear, when these laws were written, by whose authority, and in what part of India. The idea has been hazarded, that they were compiled at a comparatively late date, with a view of upholding Caste against the levelling tenets of the Buddhists. At any rate, they have no more binding force upon the people of India generally than the Book of Leviticus has upon Europe. We shall see further on that eighty-six per cent. of the population of British India does not belong to either of the Priest, Warrior, or Merchant Castes of the Books of Manu, but are members of the Sudra Caste, or of mixed Caste, or absolutely without any Caste properly so called. The subdivision of a nation into Priest, Warrior, and Merchant classes, with a fourth for the common herd, is not unusual in Oriental nations. It is notorious that

the difficulty, where it exists at all, is found among the lower Castes, the great majority of whom cannot be included under any pretence in the lowest of the Castes of Manu, and this ought to be convincing, that the question is not one practically of religion, but of deep-rooted social custom and tribal etiquette, among a people, who really have no religious belief in the sense, in which that word is known by Christian and Mahometan. The Sanskrit term for Caste is "Varna," or "colour," clearly alluding to ethnical features. The ordinary term is "Jati," or "birth," an elastic expression, like the "good family" of England. The people themselves call it "Bhaibundi," or "brotherhood," as the essence of the matter lies in the fact, that it is a close link uniting sections of the community by unwritten laws of their own devising.

Caste has certainly a good side, and its sudden destruction or collapse would entail considerable evils by the complete disorganisation of society, which would ensue. I would ask the question, whether those provinces of South-Eastern Asia, where Caste does not prevail, such as Afghanistan, Barma, Ceylon, the Settlement of Straits of Malacca, and Hong Kong, are more easily governed; whether the people are more moral, or advancing more steadily in the paths of civilisation and education, than the people of British India, who are absurdly described as enslaved by Caste? One of the most time-honoured maxims in the science of government is that famous phrase, "Divide et impera," and in Caste we have ready-made fissures in the community, which render the institution of secret societies, so common and so dangerous among the Chinese and Malays, almost impossible in India.

The striking features of Caste may be described as (1), matrimonial; (2), religious, or rather quasi-religious; (3), social. We must consider each separately.

The rules of Caste are of course technically bad in preventing the free intermarriage of tribe with tribe, just as it was bad in Rebecca not wishing her son Jacob to marry one of the daughters of Heth; as it was bad in Nehemiah compelling the Jews, after the return from the captivity, to put away their wives of the country; as it would be bad in a quiet English family shuddering at the idea of one of their younger members forming an alliance with a Negress, a Gipsy, a Chinese, or a Malay. Many speak of the vast country of India, as if it were occupied by people of one race, one religion, one rank in life, instead of being the habitat of infinite varieties of the human race. Moreover, ever since the world began, and as long as it lasts, there will be a restriction, based upon unwritten and most capricious law upon promiscuous alliances in marriage, and the fault of the native of



India is, that it has been made so rigid: The better class of Mahometans are however in this respect quite as strict, and among native converts to Christianity of undoubted excellence we find, that this difficulty cannot be got over, and that a man of good family will seek for a wife among people of his own Caste, and no equitable person could find fault with him for doing so.

Caste is thoroughly bad, and worthy of all condemnation, if it encourages the notion, that all mankind are not equal in the face of God and of their fellow-creatures, just as it was bad in the Greeks looking upon all the world as barbarians; as it was bad in the Jew asserting a superiority over the rest of mankind; as it is bad in the Anglo-Saxon asserting a superiority over the uncivilised weaker races, and the aboriginal tribes, with whom he comes into contact. But the question may fairly be stated, does Caste do so? Individual fatuous Brahmins may in their shrine, or their seclusion, say so or think so; but we are dealing with the millions, and we lay down broadly, that members of the thousand respectable Castes, which make up the population of India, do not assert, that their particular Caste is something *better than, or superior to*, the Caste of another, but that it is *different from* that of another, and they would object to eat or intermarry with the members of a Caste notoriously *superior* just as much as with a Caste notoriously *inferior*, or even with particular subdivisions of their own Caste, separated from them by some imperceptible shade of difference.

Caste may lastly be called bad in placing restriction upon promiscuous commensality, and thus limiting the form of hospitality and good-fellowship, which is common in Europe, just as it was bad in the Egyptians considering it an abomination to eat with the Hebrews, and in the Hebrews a thousand years later objecting to eat with the Gentiles. We might quote numerous other cases of tribes and classes refusing to eat together from notions of ceremonial purity both in ancient and modern times. The habits of Oriental life must be considered: insensibly certain kinds of food are objected to by one class and indulged in by others. Some classes are exceedingly nice and clean; others are very much the contrary. The hand is the only instrument used in feeding; the state, in which that hand is kept, is therefore a consideration. Besides, we know as a fact in Europe, that one of the main tests of the division of the social strata is that of taking food together or separately. It would be repulsive in the extreme to be compelled to eat and drink with those, whose vocations are nauseous, and habits uncleanly, or whose tastes in the choice and mode of preparation of food differed materially. Even as the social

ladder is mounted, and there is an assimilation in culture and personal niceties, yet still by an unwritten law the table of persons is kept separate, who are intimate in other relations of life. We find, therefore, the groundwork of a common law of humanity even in the exaggerated law of Caste with regard to the modes of eating. It is an error, however, to suppose that any restriction is thereby placed upon hospitality. I have myself accepted the hospitality of the highest Castes of Hindus, and dined by the side of the host, who excused himself courteously of partaking of the food for reasons, which I quite understood; and I have, on the other hand, entertained scores, both Hindu and Mahometan, by entrusting to others the details of the banquet, and this is the practice of good-fellowship all over India. The Mahometan in Turkey shares the food of the Christian, but it does not follow, that he is on that account more intimate with Europeans than his fellow-religionist in India is with the Hindu and Christian, whose food he would not touch.

I have dwelt upon these features of Caste to show, that it is one of the Old World customs, which has unluckily survived in India in a hard and crystalised form to the present day, while other nations under the influence of progress have toned it down, or abandoned it altogether. Among such customs may be reckoned domestic slavery of the gentle and patriarchal type, child marriage, polygamy, restriction on re-marriage of widows, belief in magic and divination, cremation of the dead, painting or seaming of the features and limbs, swathing of the feet, circumcision, and even blood feuds and duelling. It is difficult for Europeans in the nineteenth century to understand, how any one of such customs can be defended in theory, far less practised by intelligent and educated men; and yet no wise ruler of an Oriental people would venture, except in an indirect and cautious way, to interfere with such customs, which must rather be left to the slow but certain discipline of intellectual, moral, and religious progress. As regards abominable customs, offending against laws Human and Divine, such as human sacrifices, burning of widows, burying alive of lepers, female infanticide, traffic in slaves, mutilation of the human body, and threats of immolation, the Government of India has not been wanting in measures of stern repression.

When I said above that Caste is not noticed as existing in Vedic periods, I did not forget the famous stanza in the Rig Veda, of which such liberal use is made by the antagonists of the custom. It runs thus:—

“The Brahmin is his mouth: the Kshatriya was made his arms;  
What the Vaisya was that was his hips: from his feet sprung the Sudra.”

Now it is worthy of remark, that this stanza is not written in Vedic or Archaic Sanskrit, but in the modern form of that language. What should we think of lines of Ciceronian Latin found in the Laws of the Ten Tables? Again, the word "sudra" is of unknown origin, and not grammatically connected with any Vedic word. But even if the lines be genuine, they imply nothing beyond what is expressed in other countries in poetic diction; in other words, that the Priest is the mouthpiece, the Warrior the arm of defence, the Merchant the sinew, and the Working Man the groundwork of the body politic.

In this argument, however, I set aside the Hindu Scriptures, as having no direct relation to the issue, and turn to the reports of the last official Census of British India, as we have to deal with Caste, not as it was three thousand years ago, but as it is now, after seven hundred years of Mahometan and one hundred of Christian domination.

The striking results are that there are; Brahmin, ten millions; Kshatriya, five millions; other Castes, one hundred and five millions; without recorded Caste, ten millions; Mahometan, forty millions; Non-Arian, eighteen millions; making a total of one hundred and eighty-eight millions.

Now, taking the Province under the Lieutenant-Governor of Bangál as a fair subject for analysis, we find out of a total of sixty-four millions, sixty-nine specified Castes, although the number of separate tribes and Castes is calculated at little less than one thousand; and if the minor subdivisions, such as gotra, sept, and clan, are taken into consideration, the number will swell to many thousands. There are four superior and three intermediate Castes, and then come the following: trading, pastoral, preparers of cooked food, agricultural, general servants, artizans, weavers, labourers, sellers of fish and vegetables, boatmen and fishermen, dancers, musicians, and beggars. In the North-west Provinces there are two hundred and ninety-one specified Castes; in Oudh, seventy-seven; in the Panjáb, nineteen; in the Central Provinces, forty-eight; in Bombay, one hundred and forty; in Madrás, seventeen. Clearly the takers of the Census have not followed out the same principle of enumeration, and upon the data thus supplied it is not possible to arrive at an accurate detail of the Castes of British India, but it is evident, that their number far exceeds what was contemplated by the ancient men, who codified the Laws of Manu.

It must not be supposed for a moment, that the members of any Caste are restricted to any one particular trade, profession, or calling. This is one of the greatest of the inaccuracies, into which writers on

this subject have fallen, and the assertion that the institution of Caste confines a man and his family for ever to the grade in which he is born, prevents his rising to a higher class of society, whatever may be his character and merits, will not stand the test of inquiry. The history of the Marátha and Sikh nations tells the story of the upheaving of the lower Castes; and what is there in the present social state of British India to prevent a duly qualified man rising to the highest walks of life without reference to his origin or Caste? Successful adventurers are known to improve their Castes as they get richer. Fictitious Castes are a device as common as fictitious pedigrees. The ten millions of Brahmins have no doubt been recruited from several inferior Castes and from the issue of mixed marriages, for their ranks contain specimens of the most opposite physical types. If any one supposes that Brahmins, as a general rule, are engaged in priestly duties, or that any proportion of them lay claim to any arrogant superiority over their fellows, he is greatly mistaken. A gentleman is always a gentleman, and the long hereditary culture of the Brahmins has told upon their appearance and manners. Their ranks supply many of the ablest public servants of the State, though by no means a majority of the official ranks, and they are themselves subdivided into so many numerous tribes, that a kingdom, composed solely of the ten million Brahmins, would still be indelibly streaked by Caste, for there are as many subdivisions of Brahmins as there are great Castes of Hindus, and as completely separated in the matters of matrimony, commensality, and social intercourse. The Gour Brahmins would shudder at the possibility of any communion, beyond that of general acquaintance, with the Kashmíri Brahmins, who represent the ablest class in Upper India, but are eaters of flesh (excepting beef) and drinkers of spirits, which are abomination to the Gour Brahmins. The Sárswat Brahmins, who abound in the Panjáb, eat and drink with the Khatri Caste, and are employed in servile duties. Nor have the Brahmins even the monopoly of priestly duties or of sanctity; at many shrines other Castes officiate. With the great Sikh nation the Khatri Caste has quite superseded the Brahmin. In the Anglo-Indian army there is an abundance of Brahmin soldiers under the orders of low-Caste men and of Mahometans. Brahmins are always sought after by Hindus as cooks, a useful but not honourable or sacred position.

The Kshatriya Caste, if existing at all, is represented by the Rajpút and Khatri. In considering the Rajpúts, the new anomaly presents itself, that thousands of these have become Mahometans, but still claim to be Rajpúts, keep up their own family customs and

law of inheritance, attend the weddings of their own Hindu tribal brethren, have their particular bard and family priest. No inter-marriage and actual commensality is possible; but still it is a wonderful instance of the elasticity of the Caste system, when the breakers of Caste have power and numbers on their side. The Raja of one of the Mountain Rajpút States in the Himaláya is a Mahometan Rajpút, ruling over his Hindu brethren. Rajpúts take every kind of service requiring fidelity or strength; but the arm has to wield the pen as well as the sword, and at a period probably subsequent to the Laws of Manu the art of writing was imported from the West into India, and a powerful group of Castes, un contemplated in the original division of mankind, came into existence, viz., the "men of the pen," or the Writer-Castes, who are not likely to be overlooked or crushed in any part of the world. They are known by different names in many parts of India, such as the Khatri, the Káyat, the Parbhu, but it must not be supposed that these classes monopolise the right of using the pen. It would be impossible to follow in detail the other hundreds of Castes, but imperfect as confessedly our knowledge is as to the ramification of Castes, we can see clearly that religion is the smallest factor in the system. For the sake of exhausting the subject, it may be stated, that Caste has arisen from the operation of three causes: (1) religious or quasi-religious, (2) professional, (3) ethnical. We can hardly suppose that any person would argue, that the origin of any of the Castes, bearing obvious trade and professional names, was religious, as such are clearly hereditary guilds. Still less could it be urged, that the Caste of dancing-girls, jugglers, musicians, beggars, thieves, and other baser occupations, had the sanction of religion; and yet the great mass of the population is divided into such kinds of Caste, and so entirely do the people mix up the questions of Caste and profession, that a watchman is generally spoken of by the Caste to which he belongs, as the men of that Caste are all watchmen, and the great backbone of the population of the Panjáb is described indiscriminately as "Jat," which is their Caste, or Zemindár, which is their calling.

Those, who have not studied the mode, in which the motley population of India has been built up, hardly appreciate at its full value the effect of the ethnical fissures in the lower strata. The Chamárs of the North-west Provinces amount to three millions and a half, scattered in every part of the Province, employed in hereditary servile duties, or in trades of an offensive character, allowing themselves the license of eating carrion or the flesh of unclean animals, worshipping other gods than those of the Hindus, who avoid even their touch. In

every village, moreover, there is a Helot class, engaged in servile duties as watchmen, sweepers, scavengers, removers of the dead, contact with whom is shunned, as that of the Cagots in the South of France, where the same feeling has survived the European culture of many centuries. It is clear that the Shanárs of South India are ethnically distinct from the rest of the population. There is no question that all such races or tribes are of non-Arian origin, which have not accepted the thin veneer of Hindu culture, and are therefore hated and shunned as out of the pale of Hindu society, and at the same time not strong enough, like the Mahometan and Christian, to establish a rival and independent social organisation of their own. It is an absurdity to quote the famous Vedic "Foot and Mouth" stanza, or the Laws of Manu, with regard to such classes, as those Laws bear no relation to any, who are not Arian in origin, or who have not introduced themselves into the Arian system. The Shanárs worship devils, have peculiar customs, and it is no matter of surprise, that the real Hindu of Arian origin, and those of the non-Arian, who have advanced to a certain extent up the ladder of Arian culture, look upon them with abhorrence, and that the antipathetic feeling of a superior race operates here as strongly as it does on the part of the Anglo-Saxon in America against the Negro. Men must be more than men, if in one generation such antipathies could be softened down. The lower the Caste, to which the semi-Hindu has climbed, the greater the jealousy felt towards those outside the line. Among the very low classes in India this feeling must show itself by such outward signs as shunning contact, intermarriage and commensality, as their life is spent in the streets and marketplace, without the sanctity and privacy of a home, by which the richer classes keep out the unclean and the common herd.

Under a native Hindu rule it is more than probable, that the yoke of Caste pressed very heavily on the lower classes, but the sting is very much taken out under Mahometan and Christian rule. Moreover, I call attention to the following remarkable facts, as indicating that a Caste feeling is, as it were, part of the common law of the Indian people. All the Hindu sectarians, who have disturbed the peace of the Brahmanical system in a long succession for several centuries have, like the Protestant Missionaries, selected the Brahmins as the object of their idle abuse, and attempted the destruction of Caste under the alleged vaunt of the equality of mankind. Slowly and surely Caste has forced itself back again. Buddhism, which was based upon the abolition of Caste, was fairly driven out of India. The more plastic Jain accepted Caste and a transitional position. In

Ceylon the Buddhists even exhibit traces of Caste. The Sikhs of the Panjáb, after a long tilt against Caste, have relaxed their rules and relapsed into Caste. A band of celibate ascetics, or vagrant beggars, may shake off Caste, but no body of religionists has ever settled down in India to decent family life without throwing round a fence of Caste more or less rigid. The non-Arian races of the Hills, as they settle down to be agriculturists and adopt a semi-Hinduism, of their own free will assert their claim to a Caste; and, wonder of wonders! the Mahometan, who in Turkey, Arabia, Egypt, and Afghanistan, marries any one, on whom his fancy falls, and eats and drinks with the European, in India is particular as to commensality, and, if he is a member of a respectable tribe, is very restricted in the choice of a wife. The Census-report shows, that Caste is almost as prevalent among them as among Hindus, for the descendants of the conquering races, who immigrated from Western Asia, the Arab, the Persian, the Moghal, the Turk, and the Pathán, generally marry each among his own kith and kin. The Mahometan Rajpút and other of the good Hindu Castes, who became Mahometan in the time of the Empire, keep close to their tribal rules, which differ from Caste only in name. The lower Mahometans, converts from the non-Arian races, are in practice less rigid; but even among them increase of wealth is sometimes accompanied by a fictitious improvement of Caste-designation. The successful corn-factor has been known in a time of dearth to have sprung from the ranks of the Shaikh; or New Mahometan, to that of Sayyid, or descendant of the Prophet, and the self-asserting pride of a Sayyid is only equalled by that of a Brahmin.

I proceed now to show, how the strong and impartial Government of British India has acted with a view of disarming and controlling the bad and exaggerated features of Caste. In the State-Schools and Hospitals the difference of Caste is totally ignored. All, who enter there, are known as scholars and patients. In the railway-trains the community is reduced to the common denomination of passengers. We have heard of Anglo-Saxon colonies, where black and white will not mix on such occasions. In the Courts of Justice, civil and criminal, all subjects of the Queen are absolutely equal in theory and practice. A Brahmin murderer would be hanged at Banáras without benefit of clergy, and the rights of the lowest Chamár would be vindicated. In the State-Prisons all are associated together; but a prisoner of good Caste is selected as cook, as it would be obviously unjust to enhance the penalty fixed by law for a particular offence by adding a feature, which would affect some prejudicially, but not all. It is insisted that the wells of a village are

available to all, and an attempt to exclude native Christian converts was distinctly put a stop to. Any attempt to exclude men of lower Caste from the use of the streets, or to prevent males and females from wearing such dress as they chose, would not be tolerated for an instant. The service of the State, civil and military, is open to all, and men of the highest Caste are constantly subordinated to men of lower, according to their position in the service. On the other hand, any positive injury caused by one person to another, entailing injury to Caste, is the ground of an action for Tort: thus a valuable property is recognised as existing. Moreover, the native Laws of Marriage and Inheritance are accepted by the Civil Courts, and consequently the issue of a marriage, contracted contrary to the rules of Caste, is declared illegitimate.

How has society dealt with Caste? I can only give an opinion based upon experience acquired in a solitary life among the people of Upper India for weeks and months together without any European companion. I never found Caste an obstacle to social intercourse, nor did the subject ever press itself forward, and yet the population of the villages and towns visited each day differed considerably. Few villages were absolutely without Mahometans, none without men of the lowest Caste, and in the thronging of an Indian crowd there must be indiscriminate contact. In my establishment there were Brahmins, with whom I transacted ordinary business, Rajpûts, who carried my messages, Khatri and Káyat, who engrossed my orders. Mahometan and Hindu sat upon the floor working side by side; and, if the half-Caste Christian sat at a table to write English letters, it was only because the method of English correspondence requires this distinction. My own tent was daily thronged by men of all Caste and position in life, and my visits to the male apartments of the notables was considered an honour, and yet of all outcastes the European is the worst, as he asserts his right to eat both beef and pork. Thus professors of different religions mingle in social life without any unpleasant friction: each man respects his neighbour; he has no wish, indeed, to intermarry with the family of his neighbour, or share the cup and platter of his neighbour, but he does not consider himself in the least superior or inferior.

In one sense, and one sense only, Caste may be said to be religious. All that remains to the non-Mahometan population of India, the religious idea and instinct, has centuries ago shrunk into the notion of Caste, just as in Europe in the Middle Ages all that to many men remained of religion was a keen sense of personal honour. Now both Caste and Honour restrain a man's actions from what is contrary



to the rules of the brotherhood, is dishonourable, and often from crime, in a way, in which nothing else will restrain them, and in that sense Caste and Honour may be said to be religious sanctions, but in no other; and no wise legislator would venture to do ought to weaken such sanctions, the existence of which mark a certain progress in civilisation.

I cannot see that Caste is an evil of the kind and degree, which it is imagined to be. In an exaggerated and self-asserting form it would certainly be an evil under a Hindu system of Government of the stiff and intolerant form of modern religious creeds; but tolerance has ever been of the essence of the Hindu system, and in British India the claws of Caste have been cut by a strong and impartial Government, and the social pressure of a population, made up of various elements which would not submit to oppression. I submit, that in Europe classes lie in strata *horizontally*, and that in India the separation is by *vertical* fissures. I have known men of good Caste and social position as gentlemen, who were not ashamed to have in their families near relations in the grade of menial or cook. Now such a state of affairs would be impossible in Europe, and marks the enormous divergence of social customs.

Viewing the matter, therefore, from the point of view of a statesman, a moralist, an advocate for civil and religious liberty, education, and progress, I can see nothing in the National custom of Caste, that requires any interference from the Legislature. I recognise the existence in different nations of an infinite variety of family customs, habits and tendencies, and, where they are prejudicial to the better interests of the human race, the work of amelioration may be left to time, education, intercourse with other nations, and general intellectual progress.

## PART II.

# CASTE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

---

**H**ERE exists an Ancient Custom in British India among the whole of the Arian and a portion of the Dravidian population, known by the name of Caste in English, Jati in the Vernacular, and Varna in the sacred languages. This Custom does not extend to British Barma, or to the Buddhist portion of Ceylon to an appreciable extent, nor is it adopted by the non-Arian Races of India, the Dravidian, Kolarian, and Tibeto-Burman Races, which have remained uninfluenced by the Brahmanical Religion. On the other hand those Hindus, who have adopted the Mahometan Faith, and the vast number of non-Arians, who have attached themselves to the lower strata of the great Brahmanical Polity, and, strange to say, the descendants of the Afghan, Tartar, Persian, and Arab immigrants, who during the last eight hundred years have floated into India with each Mahometan wave of invasion, have sensibly, and unmistakably, adopted the Custom, as a mark of respectability, and though they talk only of Tribes, and not of Castes, yet are under the same yoke, as regards Matrimony and Commensality.

In a Paper which I read in 1879 before the National Indian Association, I discussed the nature of this Custom, and the infinite variety of its primary and secondary divisions. I showed how the claws of a Custom, which might possibly be intolerant, had been cut by the long domination of the Mahometan, and the uncompromising system of the English Administration, based on absolute equality of man with man in the Courts of Criminal and Civil Justice, the Public Service, the Railways, the Schools, &c. I pointed out how mistaken was the idea, that a man was in any way compelled to follow the profession of his Father, or was in any way debarred from his rights as a Free Agent. My conclusion was, that there was nothing in this ancient Custom, as limited by English practice rather than Law, that prevented any of Her Majesty's subjects discharging his duty to the State; that the Custom was so far guaranteed by the State, that

an action lay in the Civil Courts for Tort on the ground of wilful breach of Caste, and that the issue of children born of Hindu unions, entered into contrary to the rules of Caste, were illegitimate, and did not inherit. The Custom therefore did not deserve the wholesale abuse showered down upon it by certain persons. I have reprinted my Paper this year in my "Pictures of Indian Life," and I believe that my sentiments on this subject are shared by all statesmen who are acquainted with, and interested in the People of India. On this subject therefore I, and many other ardent supporters of Missions, are at direct issue with a great body of Missionaries. I believe them to be thoroughly mistaken.

In the course of discussion, which ensued after my Paper had been read, a gentleman of great experience in India, formerly an Editor of one of the best English Newspapers, remarked, that I had not touched upon the relation of Caste to the Christian Church. My reply was, that the National Indian Association was not the proper arena for such a discussion; I had already brought it prominently forward in the Mission Society, with which I am more particularly connected, and I now proceed to ventilate the subject in the pages of *Mission Life*.

I honour the Protestant Missionaries who devote their talents, and their lives, to the benefit of Asiatic and African races. But it must needs be, that they go out early in life, and the necessity of the language ties them to one field. Their views thus become narrowed to their own horizon. The Missionary from China writes and speaks as if the world could be converted, but for the sale of opium and the action of the Chinese gentry and literati. The Missionary from India is overpowered by the opposition caused by Caste and Secular Education. The Missionary in Africa tells sad stories of human sacrifice, cannibalism, polygamy. And so on in the other fields. The Missionary in China or Barma does not feel any sensible advantage from the absence of Caste. The Missionary in Africa looks rather longingly for Secular Education, and repression of monstrous crimes. The experienced and enlightened Missionary in each field is generally silent on such topics, for he feels, that it is the same depravity of the human heart, which opposes him in a different development in different parts of the world.

In that portion of the so-called *Kingdom of Satan*, which is known as British India, I have spent a quarter of a century, and loved the people very dearly, because I became aware of their excellences by familiar contact. No doubt the scum of the Bazaar of a great town is no more a fair representation of a great nation, than the roughs of

London are of the British people. The strong and impartial English Government has paved the way for the Missionary by putting down, with a high hand, all abominable customs, which are contrary to laws Human and Divine, such as human sacrifices, burning of widows, burying of lepers alive, female infanticide, traffic in slaves, mutilation of the body, and so forth. An enlightened Government of the Nineteenth Century does not interfere with morals, and leaves drunkenness, profligacy, gambling, the use of bad language, &c., &c., to be counteracted by the moral and religious influences of the people and by their spiritual guides, restricting itself to the punishment of offences, scheduled in the Criminal Code. But besides these things in Oriental Countries there exists a group of customs, objectionable *per se*, yet not such as to warrant the interference of an enlightened Ruler. These are domestic slavery of the gentle and patriarchal type, child marriage, polygamy, cremation of the dead, painting or searing of the face and limbs, circumcision and Caste. These are Old-World customs. We hear of them in the infancy of other nations, who have outgrown them, but unluckily customs in India survive in a hard and crystallised form, and the people are very conservative. We can quite imagine an enthusiastic young Missionary being shocked at any, or all of these customs, and wondering, why they are not at once suppressed. But those, who have had experience in ruling Oriental Nations, know, that the attempt to do so would fail, might cause the loss of Empire, would certainly entail loss of life in rebellion, and do more harm than good. The work of amelioration must be left to time, education, intercourse with other nations, and general intellectual progress.

So speaks the Statesman. But the Evangelist seeks to gather into his nascent Church souls to be saved, and he appeals to a higher than human Law. He admits, that offences against morals occur quite as much among Christians as among the Heathen, and must be left to the discipline of the Church, and the influence of the Pastor, for they are recurring evils, from which none are safe until death. But he at once puts his foot down upon some of the Old-World customs, above described, and insists that polygamy, cremation of the dead, circumcision, Caste-marks on the face, must cease, as a condition precedent to Baptism. He declares the right of the widow to re-marry, and, if any remnant of domestic slavery remained, he would forbid it, and do his best to get rid of it. But if he be wise (and Missionaries do not always possess the wisdom of this world) he will analyse the ancient custom of Caste, and make the abandonment of certain portions an essential, reserve certain portions for pastoral admonition, and leave other portions alone, for the simple reason, that to oppose them is to war

against the common feeling of Human Nature. "Naturam expelles furcâ, tamen usque recurret."

In analysing the Census of British India we find that the great Indian Nation is made up of most conflicting elements as regards Race, Religion, Language, and State of Culture. Under the pressure of strong foreign Governments a certain amount of fusion has taken place, and this process is slowly advancing year by year. But the Nation has never yet learnt to forget, that it is only an amalgam of very discordant materials, which discordancy is intensified by segregation from the rest of the world, religious dogmas, fashioned in the interest of a dominant class, and the universal practice of what is known in Europe as Trade-Unions, and ancestral occupations and possessions. Insensibly, rigid rules have surrounded marriage and Commensality; this lead on to the feeling, that one stratum, or rather vertical slice of society, is different from another, and the whole culminated in pride, overbearing conduct, and, if opportunity offered, social ostracising. But if an educated man of an ordinary Caste is asked, he will at once admit, that his Caste is not *superior to*, but only *different from*, that of his neighbour.

For a moment let us turn aside from India, and, looking round us, let us consider the phenomenon of Caste, as developed from ethnical and social causes, in the United States, a land of strict equality of man with man, as regards the Negro; as regards the Bantu tribes in the Cape Colony; and in England.

Sir George Campbell made a tour in the United States in 1878, and carefully considered the relation of the antagonist races to each other. His conclusions are that "the separation of the two castes is becoming more pronounced than ever; that since the admission of the blacks to political equality the movement has been rather against social equality than otherwise; that there are entirely separate black churches; that the difficulty about public conveyance had been got over; and all travel together, which is a great step in advance; that, like the case of the Hindu, no Intermarriage or Commensality is possible; that there is universal separation in the public schools, at the wish of the Blacks, though good feeling and good temper are exhibited in daily relations; that half-castes, even when quite fair in complexion, go to the black schools; that the Caste system must be accepted as a fact; that the most pronounced philo-negro in the States would recoil from the idea of Intermarriage, *which is positively prohibited by law in most of the States*; that Christianity might effect much to bring the races together, but not for the present."

I quote his concluding words:—"To one accustomed to see great

communities in India, where varieties of Caste do not interfere with union in a common social system ; where, on the contrary, Caste but represents a variety of occupations and functions in the same system, the existence of two Castes in America does not seem to present an insuperable obstacle to well-being. In India all the Castes live very well together, and support one another, by each contributing their functions to the village existence. It is hard, then, that in the United States two Castes cannot co-exist supposing that means of amalgamating them are not found."

In South Africa we have an unexceptional witness in Mr. Anthony Trollope. At the great Lovedale Missionary Institution of the Free Church of Scotland the boys and girls, black and white, are described as intermixed. But the European boys would not come to the school, if compelled to eat with the Kafirs. Any idea of intermarriage of the two races would not be thought of.

Lastly, in England, where all are of the Anglo-Saxon or kindred races, and no differences exist of Customs, or Colour, can we truthfully say, that there are not restrictions upon Intermarriage and Commensality, which have the essence, though not the name of Caste? The law, indeed, does not hold the penalty of illegitimacy over unequal marriages, but would the most devoted servant of God, lay or clerical, in a better class of life relish the marriage of his son or daughter to the pious pew-opener? Or would he admit to his table the upright though unsavoury scavenger? Has any one of our European Missionaries as yet admitted a native of India to the honour of being his son-in-law? Is it not the fact, that the white Missionary forms a Caste with superior position and superior emoluments to the native and half-caste? And I do not deny that it is right, that it should be so. The Englishman landed in India considers himself, however low in the strata of English society, to be superior to the highest Indian. But to the eye of the Ethnologist the position of the superior native Caste is as much removed above the lower, and they feel it as much to be so as, in the above case, does the English man or men we have now referred to. Even in Africa we find traces of Caste among some, if not among all tribes. In fact, self-respect and dawning civilisation first evidenced themselves in tribes becoming particular about Marriage and Commensality. I do not for one moment deny, that the custom is developed in India in a much more rigid and unpleasant form than elsewhere. But what I do maintain is, that it is but a tree grown up to an extravagant height and bulk from the same germ, which is found, more or less, in every community of men.

To myself, with all my recollections of valued friends left behind

me in India, whose features and voices live in my memory, and some of whose portraits still decorate my walls, it is matter of no small surprise to hear these good easy people, amiable and ignorant, tolerant and affectionate, described in a Missionary periodical, March, 1879, as practising "a custom fraught with destruction to their souls, utterly divorced from morality, a custom which eats out human sympathy, annihilates fellow-feeling, renders the heart cruel and callous, and dams up the stream of affection." I can scarcely believe, that my Brahmans and Khatri, who still send me letters, though they can never hope for any advantage at my hands, and tell me about their children and our mutual friends, English, Mahometan, and Hindu, without distinction of Race or Religion, are "slaves of a system which tends, more than anything else the Devil has invented, to destroy the feelings of general benevolence, and make three-fourths of mankind the hopeless slaves of the other"; that "it was an invention of the author of evil, the father of lies, by which he enthrals millions of souls"; that "it is Satan's masterpiece, Satan's chief institution, the monster evil of India, obstructive to all efforts for the improvement of the *temporal* condition of the people, as well as a soul-destroying influence."

It is sad to read such a tirade as this, for the spirit of it is foreign to the precepts of Christ. It may be called *tall* talk, and indeed *foolish* talk; or it may only be a flowery, oratorical way of implying that the writer disapproved of Caste. And, no doubt, with a *tabula rasa*, Caste, as well as many other time-honoured customs, might be dispensed with. But we have to deal with a Nation as we find it, and it is idle to say, that the Indians with Caste are not as prosperous, as advanced in Culture, Arts, and Sciences, as benevolent, law-abiding, temperate, moral, and, in their own way, as religious as the Chinese, with whom Caste has never prevailed. Nor do we find in Ceylon, Barma, China, and Japan, though the people are entirely free from this snare of Satan, that the Gospel makes greater progress for its absence. In truth, people, who are free from Caste, or opium-eating, or cannibalism, are still far from God, and the literati, the Brahmans, and the Medicine-men, are but the Pharisees of the Scriptures, or the good old Conservatives of modern time, who stand on their old ways, and right or wrong will not listen to new doctrines. A learned and devoted Bishop has wisely remarked, that the "Christian Church has no commission to bring all Nations to any other uniformity than that of the Faith. She must leave National habits and customs (not amounting to deliberate sins, or crimes by law) alone. The Spirit of Jesus will, in its own good time, by the influence of Preaching, Teaching, and Example, work out the special type

of Culture, Civilisation, and Social Habit, which is good, or at least possible, under the political and physical circumstances of the country."

The evils of Caste have been intensified to the Christian Missionary by the policy adopted of working from the lower strata of Society up to the higher. Unquestionably the souls of the meanest have the same value as those of the highest, and the Gospel was specially meant for the poor. St. Paul, however, clearly addressed the better classes. St. Augustine went to the King, and the Church of England was not based upon the scavengers, and lowest herdsmen of the Nation. The Pagani were the last to become Christian. However, we must grapple with the phenomenon as it exists, viz., a Church, consisting mainly of non-Arians, members of the lowest ranks of Society, of inferior Castes, so low that the Sudra Caste, which in general estimation is the lowest rung of the ladder, becomes, by the discovery of lower outcaste depths, one of dignity. It must be remembered, that in India, as elsewhere, the lower the Caste the more particular and precise are the Rules to protect it. These converts have had no sacrifice of social status to make when they accepted their new Faith. But their numbers, and the defilement of their old, and, possibly, present occupations, this, sticking to their skirts, presents a frightful stumbling-block to the man of Education, of Position, and of Social Estimation, who is moved by the Holy Spirit to become a Christian. Let any reader of these pages faithfully apply such circumstances to himself and to his family circle, and judge.

The Church of Christ is, however, a new Society, one with the highest morality, the grandest aspirations, and the most precious promises. Men upon entering such a Society, and becoming inheritors of such promises, must be prepared to make sacrifices. The unclean must be no longer unclean; the opium-smoker must no longer debase himself; the cannibal must no longer indulge his abominable appetite; the bloody man must no longer take away life; the proud man must admit, *ex animo*, that all before God are equal; that the worship of God is common to all without distinction of person; that Christ died for all; that the Ministers of God and Teachers of His Truth are to be listened to and respected without reference to their origin. These are essential conditions precedent, and may thus be formalised:—

- I. Frank admission of the equality of all men before God.
- II. No separation of Churches or of Seats in Churches except for the sexes.
- III. Partaking of the same Bread and Wine from the same Cup and Platter, at the same time without distinction.



IV. Social intercourse with ordained Ministers and Office-holders of the Church, in the Homes, the School, and Church.

V. Abandonment of Polygamy, Slavery, Circumcision, Caste-marks, Notions of ceremonial defilement, and Belief in witchcraft, Soothsaying, or Spirits.

VI. No separation of high and low Castes in Burial-grounds.

It is unnecessary to allude to savage and inhuman customs, as the Laws of Anglo-India have stamped them out. For Office-holders of the Church, both Lay and Ordained, a fuller and more thorough compliance with the spirit of the above must be insisted upon, as the condition of office.

But outside such conditions are two important factors of Human Society—COMMENSALITY and INTERMARRIAGE. The founders of the Indian Church have no authority to lay upon that Church a greater burden than is imposed upon the English Church. Let us consider these subjects calmly but firmly. The Laws of Anglo-India have guaranteed the Customs, having the force of Law, with regard to Marriage and Inheritance. The Convert, however, must at once surrender his legal right to Polygamy. No right of divorce would, *ipso facto*, survive his change of Religion. But the Missionary must pause, ere he ventures upon the gross tyranny of insisting upon his converts associating and eating together, except by spontaneous action, and avoid the still more violent infringement of Natural Equity in enforced Intermarriages, which might involve the Missionary in a Criminal Prosecution, or an action for Civil damages.

There are notorious instances of excellent Christians of good social position and Caste, who, when they had occasion to be married, went long distances at considerable expense to find a Christian wife of their own Caste and station in life, instead of helping themselves, as many Missionaries would suggest, from the senior class of the Mission Girls' School, consisting of low-Caste young women.

Some of the Protestant Missionaries are as unreasonable in denouncing Caste in the Christian Church as the Roman Catholics are in denouncing Freemasonry. I cannot say that I think highly of either institution. But the roots of both lie deep in the soil, and both have a side of goodness. It is vain to run counter to the deep currents of human opinion, and institutions such as these will last as long as the world lasts. It scarcely lies in the mouths of those Societies, who plead for the independence of the Native Churches, both at present and in future, to interfere with their Social Customs, and attempt to bind the Indian congregations with ropes of tow, which will be snapped at once. The Native Christians already show signs of desiring for

themselves a Church modified to some extent in its forms and ceremonies so as to suit Oriental notions. And a modified form of Caste, limited, we may hope, to Rules of Intermarriage and Commensality, will, we may depend upon it, ever be found a feature in any such Native Indian Church.

The merits and the good points of the character of the Indian people are without number. They are very docile; free from the curse of drink; polygamy, where it does exist (and it is exceptional) is very different from the polygamy of Africa; and if intoxicating drugs are indulged in, the cases are rare; assassination, secret societies, and blood feuds are unknown. It is doubly unwise of the Missionary in these conditions to tilt against a brick wall, and to step aside from his obvious duties of preaching the Gospel. As to Mission Boarding Schools, or any other similar Institutions of a benevolent character, such conditions can be imposed as seem proper to the benefactors, and it would be ludicrous to allow the least atom of Caste to be maintained in such Institutions. The State would not tolerate it in the Ferries, the Railway-Carriage, or the School.

Let us recollect that the "Kingdom of God" is not meat, or drink, or marriage; that things much worse than Caste exist in the English Church after centuries of Christianity; that the practical man considers what is possible and equitable, not what is abstractedly desirable, as if he had to deal with an Utopia; and, finally, that a word can be said in favour of Caste; for the feeling of Caste in England makes a gentleman polite, a tradesman honest, and a soldier brave.

I now proceed to quote upon this important question some opinions of men whose judgments are worth recording:—

Bishop Daniel Wilson, after recapitulating, very much as given in my six Rules, the matters of Church Order, which he must insist upon, in supercession of Caste prejudices, closes thus: "I do not interfere with your national customs, or with matters of dress and food; but old heathenish customs must be relinquished."

Bishop Gell, of Madras (1868), writes on the importance of "exchanging the distinctions of Caste for those of rank, education, and the like," that: "this object must be obtained, not by coercive measures, but by persuasion, and the power of the truth of Christ, working upon the prejudiced heart; and by the use of every opportunity for making advances without irritating."

In the official organ of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (December, 1877) we find the following passage with regard to a high Caste convert:—

"I took pains to advise him *not to break his caste*, but to eat, drink,

dress as heretofore, and live among his people, only abstaining from everything idolatrous." Upon inquiry I received a reply from the late Mr. Bullock, the Secretary, that in his *private* opinion the Missionary had taken the right course, and that the Missionaries of the S.P.G. generally would do as he did.

A most striking testimony on the subject is that of the Rev. Dr. H. Bower, of Madras, in the *Indian Evangelical Review* for 1876. He had read a Paper, in the February of that year, before the Madras Diocesan Church Conference. It was a vigorous, downright exposure of the dark side of Caste; but suddenly the note is changed; like the prophet, he began to curse and ended in blessing. "I wrote an essay on Caste twenty years ago; I was young, inexperienced, and enthusiastic; since then, as I grow old, and see more of men and of the world, I am disposed to be more charitable, and lenient to all, who have scruples on this intricate subject. In order to form a just estimate of the trials of a high-Caste convert we must put ourselves in his place, and view things from his standpoint. All Castes, high and low, who embrace Christianity have peculiar difficulties to encounter. Caste, or 'class prejudices,' seem to be inherent in fallen human nature. They are felt in Europe, in America, and all the world over, as well as in India. Their power pervades all minds: it in some measure influences the State, the Church, Benevolent Societies, Religious Communities, and even pious individuals. It showed itself in the prejudices of Peter. Providence has made a difference between one man and another with regard to birth, wealth, learning, and position. These distinctions cannot be ignored, however much they may be regulated, or mitigated, or improved. Are we justified in demanding of converts more than Repentance and Faith, which was all that the Apostles demanded? Capricious dictation and rigorous law will do no good. Charity and Liberty are more important than Uniformity. We must allow converts to retain their simple and innocent usages and customs, while we strike at the root of immoral and idolatrous practices; we must be careful not to disgust them with trivial matters."

A native clergyman at the same Conference remarked as follows in favour of the lenient treatment advocated by Dr. Bower: "A Caste-Christian may not answer the *beau ideal* of Christian perfection, but, so long as he is a Christian, he comes under Christian influences, and gradually accepting in its Christian sense the brotherhood of Man he may less and less attach any importance to Caste. In dealing too rigorously with Caste the Missionary demands on the part of the convert the exhibition of the highest virtue, and the most self-denying

Christian graces, and makes no allowance for prejudices deeply rooted by immemorial custom." Another Missionary thought that "Caste should be recognised as an evil, and all moral means used to uproot it, while refraining from severe measures." Another remarked that "if native opinion were moulded, Caste would die out like slavery from the Early Church."

I do not place much value upon the opinion of a Roman Catholic Missionary *as such*, but I accept common sense from whatever quarter it comes. In the *Missions Catholiques* of 1880 I read: "Le seul point essentiel des Castes c'est le mariage: les gens d'une caste ne contractent pas d'alliance avec ceux d'une autre. Les Castes étant des distinctions purement sociales le prêtre Catholique ne gêne en rien la liberté naturelle de ses ouailles."

The Lutheran Church has openly declared for the maintenance of Caste, so there is always that refuge open to the neo-Christian.

The following practical testimony is given by a Madras Minister: "The longer I work among the people the more am I convinced, that, until we get a staff of workmen from the high-Castes, our work in that direction will be unsuccessful. A high-Caste catechist may work with perfect impunity among the low-Castes; but a low-Caste man can never cross the threshold of a high-Caste man. I know the common cant, that the Gospel can level all Caste obstacles, social and religious, and that no Caste distinctions should be countenanced. This springs from mistaken zeal and downright ignorance. Many Missionaries are not so prudent as they ought to be, while they themselves are, perhaps, as high-Caste socially as the high-Caste Indian himself. I know of no Missionary, who would be willing to sit down in a low-Caste house, and take his meals with the inmates, or let them sit down with him at his own table. This is a social distinction. There is no moral or religious principle involved in it, nor does the low-Caste consider such implied."

As a commentary to this I may remark, that in the first Report of the Native Panjáb Council in the North of India it is mentioned, that the Missionary agents had to simulate to be high-Caste, though they were not so, with a view of getting an access and a hearing. How often in England is it stated, that it is important for an ordained clergyman to be a gentleman? Now this is Caste of the rankest kind, since in the eyes of the Lord nothing is common nor unclean; and the word gentleman is not found in the Bible.

The Rev. Mr. Hickey, a retired Missionary, remarks with truth, that "Caste is more ethnological than superstitious; the lowest day labourer will not take the food cooked by one of another Caste, much

less would he marry with such. The design is to keep the clanships distinct. Education will have greater influence in this matter than rigorous Church discipline."

The Rev. Mr. Adamson remarks, that "in dealing with our weaker brethren in the faith some little respect should be shown for national ideas." He considers "the scheme of the annual dinner, or Love-feast, to be next door to compelling converts to adopt a European style of dress." And so indeed it is.

The whole question turns upon Christian liberty in doing, or abstaining from doing, what is not contrary to the law of the Bible, and the law of the land. The Missionary who compels his Christians to partake of a Love-feast, or who forcibly arranges marriages contrary to the wishes of their families, is doing an action contrary to the law of love, to natural equity, and which will affect him most, when these communities grow strong enough to set aside both the letter and the spirit of whatever laws may be framed for their government. Much is said in these days about the paramount importance of the independence of the Native Church. With the Native Council of that Church will eventually rest the decision of such matters as these. For the first generation, at least, we may fully expect that a separation of Jew and Gentile will exist. After this, and gradually, under the influence of example, advice, and, above all, God's grace, such will, no doubt, in the end disappear. In the meantime, why should the Missionary put a stumbling block in the way of the infant Church, and place upon his converts a burden with regard to Commensality and Intermarriage, which he himself would not touch with his little finger?

The present policy of some Missions practically closes the door of the Church against the better classes, and opens it only to the very refuse of society. Colonel Sleeman, a skilled observer, remarked that what chiefly prevented the spread of Christianity was the dread of exclusion from Caste, and the convert's utter hopelessness of ever finding any respectable circle of society in his new sphere. Other observers have remarked, that the unhappy convert is not admitted to the English Caste, which is the strongest and most arrogant and exclusive Caste in India, and of which the Mahometans, in spite of themselves, share the feelings.

Bishop Sargent very pertinently observed in 1871: "So long as all sit together in the Church, partake of the same cup in the Lord's Supper, admit the administrations of men considered originally of lower Caste, and abstain from all heathen rites and ceremonies, what other overt acts are there that we can legitimately insist on? Now

the above is the extent to which our rural congregations in the mass go. Have we power to insist upon this promiscuous eating in a social manner as a *sine quâ non*? It seems to me that the only power left us in dealing with this matter is example and persuasion. In my mind to whatever means I have recourse, I see that Love must be the spring; or the result will be disappointment." We may be thankful, that there is a Christian Bishop such as the man who wrote this, and who had lived years among the people: The Love, that is required to subdue this evil, would prevent the uttering of such exaggerations, and the penning of such abuse, as disfigure the periodicals of Evangelical Societies on this subject, and which are a scandal to the Christian Church.

In the Christian settlement of Kishnagar in Bangál a great trouble broke out a few years ago, and three well-known and esteemed native Christians were sent from Calcutta to visit the Christians, and report. They were Bangáli, and knew what they were about. They were of opinion that the more the removal of the Caste distinction was insisted upon at the present moment, the less likelihood there was of success, and that the best solution of the difficulty was to let matters alone; to treat the people kindly, and so win their affections as gradually to dispel their prejudices by some Christian teaching. A European Missionary did not hesitate to express his opinion, that no one would like to be compelled to eat and associate with people given to filthy habits, and that the angry feeling of the people in this case was caused by the exhibition of an overbearing spirit on the part of the Missionary.

Of course scores of quotations could be given in the opposite sense to the preceding ones. It often happens, with regard to the writers, that they faithfully repeat the same cuckoo note, and "*quod non intelligunt damnant.*" The writers are either good men of the exalted type, who dream of a Christian Utopia "of faultless men, born again to a new life"; or they are ignorant men, knowing neither the people, nor their language, and certainly imbued with no love towards them. No doubt there is a difficulty in getting a suitable wife for a young Neo-Christian of an isolated Caste, and it is not well for the Indian convert to remain unmarried. These are the difficulties of all nascent communities. Again, the re-marriage of young widows is a measure of the greatest importance. There is little sentiment in such unions in India, though they may claim an average amount of happiness and fidelity. Protestant Missionaries in these matters are unconsciously following the example of all the Hindu Sectarian Reformers, who, century after century, have attacked Caste, but with-

out success. Such movements were the result of the upheaving of the lower classes against the Priesthood, and against the oppression of the upper classes generally, and in all cases the vernacular languages were made use of to influence the people. It may be added that the educated atheistical classes of modern India are fighting against Caste, in the interest of unrestricted eating, and promiscuous marriage, and are not desirable allies for the Missionary.

There is too great a tendency on the part of Missionaries to treat the people as children. Babes they are, indeed, in Christ; but a robust and vital Church must be composed of hardy and independent members. The late General Dalton remarks, that Christianity is offered, even to Non-Arian races, in the least alluring form. The Kole are fond of ornaments, and the women like to wear natural flowers in their hair. The Missionaries require, as a mortification of the flesh, that they shall wear no decoration. The General expresses his hope, that the necessity for such rigid austerity may cease, and that the girls may be allowed the harmless and pleasing custom of wearing flowers in their hair. The wish may also be expressed that the Brahmin, who is gentle in birth and by culture, may not, on becoming a Christian, be compelled to associate with, and pressed even to marry amongst, those who form, socially, the dregs of his nation.

While on the one hand the State guarantees the rights of the people of India to their immemorial customs, on the other hand, when individuals or families have deliberately abandoned Caste, or tribal designations, and accepted the new denomination of "Christian," the conduct of the Courts of Justice, and the Recorders of the Census, in persisting in the use of the abandoned description, in spite of a protest, is open to serious objection, and would not be maintained for an instant, if proper application were made to Government.

There is, then, a portion of this Indian custom of Caste which is protected by the Law of the Land, and there is another portion which has the sanction of what the natives are pleased to call "Dharam," or Religion. The question for the prudent Christian is to decide, whether the *Social* portion, so deeply entwined with the feelings of the people, cannot be dissociated from the objectionable Religious portion, and be accepted, or at any rate tolerated, in a Christian Church. The Legislature of British India has by statute declared, and declared justly, that no person shall forfeit any rights, which he would otherwise have enjoyed by becoming a Christian. The Hindu and Mahometan population have acquiesced in this Law, imposed upon them by an alien government, and which they would never have enacted themselves,

though, in truth, it has been practically the Common Law of India for many centuries. The convert thus passes into the new community with such property as he is entitled to by inheritance, and the Law allows no disqualification or disability of any kind to operate against him. In what other country, except England and the United States, does such liberty prevail? Let the Christian Church, on her side, allow these converts to retain their *social* customs, until such shall, under the influence of education and higher civilisation, lose their present rigid and exaggerated forms, and assume the elasticity, which is enjoyed in European countries. Upon a review of the entire subject we are forced to the following conclusions :

I. Whatever the Missionary Society in England, or the Missionary Agent in India, may wish and advise, the Native Church, which will, sooner or later, be independent, will do what it likes in the matter. The Civil Power in India will support it in the exercise of rights guaranteed to all subjects. Public opinion is, and ever will be, strongly in its favour, and against the extreme section of the Missionaries. No Reformed Church will ever be supported in the enforcement of arbitrary regulations, restricting the lawful liberty of citizens; nor will harsh ecclesiastical discipline be tolerated, or be possible, in a country full of rival Churches.

II. One of the greatest obstacles to Conversion is the entire destitution of all social respectability, which accompanies the acceptance of Christianity. Some remarkable men, like Ram Chandra of Delhi, Nehemiah Goreh of Banáras, Krishna Mohun Banerji of Calcutta, have been practically incorporated into English society, and have found a new status, to which their great talents, their high culture, as well as their earnest faith, entitled them. But the respectable member of the middle class, with small talents and less education, but whose soul is as dear to God and the Church, as that of his exalted brethren above alluded to, loses his companions, his social ties, his credit, and all that makes up the charm of life, and finds no new community with which he can associate. It is a fearful thing to contemplate the position of such a man. Great will be his reward hereafter, for he has given up all for his Master's sake, and taken his Saviour at His word. But the flesh is proverbially weak. In India the Martyr, in the old sense, is unknown, but comparatively few will have strength to be Confessors, unless their way is smoothed in all things lawful, and their entrance into the Church is barred by no unnecessary stumbling blocks laid upon its threshold.

I would not for one moment be supposed to suggest any concession of Christian doctrine and practice, or any amalgam of Hinduism and



Christianity ; but I would remind all, who are interested in the spread of Christ's Kingdom, that the Church in India may be as much built on Christ as our own, and yet have very different external developments. It may be free from many of the weaknesses, which disgrace our own, and may be exposed to others, which we have never suffered from. I am deliberately of opinion, from a long and intimate knowledge of the great races of Northern India, that to struggling converts trying to pass into the Christian fold through the mazes of an Oriental civilisation, an Oriental morality, and Oriental weakness of character, it is desirable, that the boon should be conceded of being allowed to marry only within certain families, if they wish to be so restricted, and to eat and drink only with certain people, *except at the Lord's Table*. It is amazing to think, that Christian ministers should place on such weak backs a burden, which strong Christians, such as may be found in an old Christian country like this, would not allow their ministers to suggest to them from the pulpit. The whole mistake arises from our forgetting that the people of India are men of like passions to ourselves, neither worse nor better. The Missionary will find it as much as he can do to wean them from Idolatry, keep them from Immorality, and protect them from Infidelity. And the permanency of his work will depend upon his remembering this. The English domination may pass away like a dream in the course of another generation, and only be remembered as a somewhat important incident in the long history of Indian civilisation. But Institutions, built up by the Great Truths of Scripture upon the solid foundations of Natural Equity, will stand unshaken amidst the ruin of empires, and wield no lessened power, when the mightiest thrones have fallen.



