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A LETTER FROM THE BISHOP OF COLOMBO

TO

THE MEMBERS

OF

THE CEYLON MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION.



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The Ceylon Missionary Association.

COLOMBO, ALL SAINTS' DAY, 1878.

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

I ought first to express my regret that there was no letter last Epiphany. It was a time of great anxiety to me here. There were causes of anxiety which I could not well have left unmentioned, and yet it would have been useless to speak of them. This was really the reason of my not writing. Still, I hope, my promise to write once a year was not wholly unfulfilled, since a good many short letters and descriptions of our work were sent home for circulation among you. I trust, however, that I shall never let another Epiphany pass in the same way.

Since the beginning of 1877 we have seen and learnt much. By God's mercy, we have seen some grievous questions in part at least set at rest; we have seen many works prosper more than we could have hoped, and some disappoint even more than we feared. We have learnt, and I suppose shall have to learn more and more, how little any human effort can do to secure spiritual results, learnt to depend more and more on prayer. Pray for us and our work, my friends! We are in constant danger, in the midst of all our planning and organizing, of getting to trust in human machinery more than in God's Spirit. Perhaps this is particularly a Bishop's danger. He has so much to do with schemes, founding Churches, opening schools, laying out work, that he is in danger of thinking, "When this and that is done—if we can only secure such and such a plan—then

all will go well," and of forgetting that spiritual results can only be obtained by spiritual means.

Then again, we need your prayers—I speak for myself and my colleagues here, and for Missionary Churches everywhere—that we may be guided to use the right means, such as God will bless, for the consolidation andⁿ extension of His Kingdom. We see in Scripture that the means, by which it pleased God to bring about the victories of His people, were often those which no man, unguided by Him, would ever have thought of; or even such as, if they had not been pointed out by God Himself, would have seemed most unsuitable. Hence we must seek His guidance rather than human ingenuity for our plans. And we must inquire rather how He has led His Church to work during the whole eighteen centuries of her Missionary career, and especially in her pure and vigorous prime, than what are the methods which may commend themselves to those who, whether as Churches, as Societies, or as individuals, have but lately addressed themselves to the work. Pray for us that we may be enabled to “bring out of our treasure things new and old.”

Now I must tell you that planning and organizing have been going on among us with considerable activity, not merely among those who came out with me or since my coming, but in all parts of the Church, native as well as English. In my last letter I told you that in the Coffee districts the English Planters were bestirring themselves, under the impulse given by my predecessors, to provide more churches and clergy. Since that time I have ministered in at least four new churches, and can point to the beginnings of three more. These are very small, generally unconsecrated, churches, and in some instances it is expressly provided that they should be free for the use of the Presbyterians, either when not needed by the Church, or, in one case, at specified hours. This compromise is not wholly satisfactory, but charity has seemed to render it allowable. There has been, in past times, very great indifference among many Planters, as to the distinction between the Church and the Presbyterians, and it was thought that, by sinking differences, both could worship together; a more intelligent or more loyal appreciation of the Church has shown that this cannot be, but we have still a strong desire among us to keep together as nearly as we can.



To raise funds for the support of the clergy in these districts has always been a difficult thing. The course which has been taken of late, of insisting more than before on the distinctive teaching and discipline of the Church, has involved the loss of most of that aid which formerly was obtained from Presbyterians, and for a time the difficulties were serious. The loss is now, I hope, more than compensated for by the increased attachment of Churchmen, and though I hardly hope to see the maintenance of these stipends cease to be a matter of anxiety, I can describe it as being, in some of the districts, put on a satisfactory footing, and I have good hopes of the others. To a considerable number of the Planters we are still unable to supply the ministrations of the Church. The smaller and less accessible districts cannot support a clergyman for themselves, and we have no itinerant clergyman as yet who could go round to them in turn. Even the important and accessible districts of Happutale and Haldamulla, on the road between Badulla and Ratnapura, are but poorly provided for, having only the rare visits which the Rev. G. H. Gomes can spare from his important work at Badulla.

To come down from the hills to the low country, the English-speaking congregations in the various out-stations (as all towns except Colombo are called) are doing something. Either a church is being built, as at Negombo, (this will I hope be consecrated before my letter reaches you,) or a parsonage, as at Puttalam, or a school, as at Kalpitiya, or all these, as at Kurunegala, (where a parsonage has been built, a girls' school built, land selected for another school and for a new church, by the indefatigable efforts of the Rev. H. C. Hancock,) or, at least new furniture for the church—harmoniums, Altar vessels, and the like—is being provided. In St. Paul's, Kandy, and in Holy Trinity, Colombo, new chancels have been added and new organs erected. In Galle a new church for the Sinhalese is at least planned, but the failure of efforts to obtain a proper site has kept it back; in Jaffna, the Rev. C. A. Koch, who has a good church and is content, I suppose, to be without a parsonage, has developed a capital school in which he has a hundred boys; Mr. Hadley, at Trincomale, has similarly been starting schools. In fact I doubt if I could name a place, in which I have not seen definite additions made to the machinery of the Church.

In strictly Missionary fields it is the same. We have seen

new works opened in Kandy, Kalutara, Weligama, and other places, (of which I shall speak more fully,) and the old work in Jaffna, Cotta, Baddegama (of the Church Missionary Society), in Batticaloa, Badulla, Buona Vista, Matara, Tangalla and other places (of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel), is, with scarcely an exception, increased in the outward means of growth.

It is for God's Spirit to quicken all this machinery with life, to flow through all these channels, to sanctify all the ministers whom He employs, that I so earnestly seek your prayers.

We have much to contend against in the way of disappointments. I myself could not speak now as strongly as I did two years ago of the prosperous condition of our Church. On first coming I went from place to place and met large congregations everywhere; but a little more knowledge has convinced me that a large proportion of these were heathens, mere gazers, and many more "Nominal Christians," little if at all better than heathens. I held meetings at different places, and the people seemed eager for churches and clergy, and were ready to promise anything; but sad experience has convinced me how little such promises are to be relied upon. Again, in the very places where most has been done there seems to be least fruit and least gratitude,—as if, the more we loved, the less we must be loved. Again, we find, as we get to know the native character better, to what a great extent weakness and the absence of any habit of self-control renders their charming docility and gentleness misleading as an indication of character. Amid these discouragements, which meet clergy, lay-ministers, teachers—all alike, it is necessary to pray for patience and hope as well as love, that we may bear with the weak, and not lose heart, and yet at the same time—this is so difficult—not lower our standard.

We have admirable examples in some of the English laymen, and the number of those who are serving as Lay Readers is rapidly increasing. To this I look as a most hopeful point. The faults of the English have done much in the past to check the spread of the Truth, and have kept down the level of Christian life among the native Christians; but I trust that this voluntary and public profession made and service rendered by men of high station and influence will do still more for good.

Before I leave these remarks upon the Church in general, I

ought to say, in regard to its Missionary side, that I cannot think, so far as my opportunities have yet enabled me to judge, that we are likely, humanly speaking, very soon to see the end of Buddhism. There is a good deal of life in it still,—a torpid, cold-blooded life, difficult to kill. Where Missionary effort is vigorous, Buddhism puts out considerable energies. We see new Dágobas rising, old temples being restored, schools opened by the priests, the study of the ancient books here and there revived. I have on my table a most respectable octavo volume well printed and got up,—the enterprise of a Buddhist priest, who has printed it in his private press, close to St. James' Church, Kotahena. "It is suitable," he says in the preface, "for the refutation of heretics." The book is "*Milinda prasnaya*," or the "Questions of Menander," (alluded to in Mr. Rhys Davids' "*Buddhism*," p. 96,) and as far as I can see, its contents, except in so far as they assert the special doctrines about Atheism and Extinction, &c., are very reasonable and moral. No harm whatever will come from people reading such works; but the publication of them shows some vitality in the religion of which they are manuals. Indeed, if the Buddhists knew the contents of the better of their books, the Missionaries' work would be much easier; but not one in a hundred knows even the names of the virtues or of the methods there recommended. In such books there are capital words for Faith, Charity, Gratitude, words by which every shade of meaning—Piety, Devotion, Zeal, Diligence, Perseverance, and so on—can be expressed, but these are unintelligible to the people, and we have to use some pointless indefinite word instead. Not one in a thousand, I suppose, can understand the "*Milinda prasnaya*," though it was written in Sinhalese only two centuries ago.

But Buddhism is virtually obtaining support from Europe. In the minds of the more educated, it allies itself easily with modern European infidelity. The prestige given to Pali, the Buddhistic language, by the recent direction to it of the interest of scholars, has done something, and will do more, to give prestige to Buddhism itself.

It must therefore be remembered that we have not the satisfaction, so to say, of meeting genuine Buddhism on its own ground, but we have to face, under the name of Buddhism, on one side, the modern weapons of European unbelief, and on the other, the gross dulness of devil-worship and witchcraft.

For as, among the educated, Buddhism appears as Positivism, so, among the ignorant, it is but a screen for devil dances, the use of charms, and such like; of which I have before given you some account in manuscript.

It is time, however, that I should specify a few details of our work. There are one or two important Diocesan schemes in hand, in which I should like you to be interested. We are just entering on the great task of building a Cathedral. The present Cathedral is a very small though beautiful church, and is more properly the Chapel of St. Thomas' College; and, when all the College boys are in it, has little room for visitors. It is also in a position which is daily becoming less central. We are therefore going to begin a large Cathedral, towards which some preliminary steps are already taken. Another work, nearer completion, is the securing of cemeteries for the Church of England, and their consecration, and the erection of chapels in them. This is going forward in all parts of the island, under the provisions of an Ordinance of the local Legislature, by which portions of the General Cemeteries may be so assigned. Hitherto, in some places the Church has had her own Cemeteries, which are now in most cases closed to make way for the public Cemeteries, but more Churchmen have used the unconsecrated public Cemeteries, side by side with other denominations of Christians, or even with heathens. We hope that, when every place has its own Church Cemetery, well kept, and furnished with the necessaries for Christian-like burial, both the attachment of Churchmen to the Church, and their appreciation of the Resurrection and the sanctity of the Body, will be increased. A third scheme of Diocesan interest is the Training College for Native Schoolmasters (Sinhalese), which has been started at Kandy under the Rev. T. B. Robertson. This has been at work exactly a year, and there are now seven students, who are boarded and educated free of expense. This is of course a costly work, and we shall be very thankful for subscriptions towards it. It is essentially a Missionary work, as all the Trained Masters will teach in Mission schools, and our chief aim is to ensure their sound religious training.

In Kandy the Archdeacon is succeeding, I think, beyond expectation in drawing together into one system the different elements of the Church. The English and Burgher Congregation and Schools, the Tamil Congregation and Schools, the Sinhalese

Training College and School, all form part of one parochial system ; and so far it works well. The girls' school, for the English education of the higher rank of Sinhalese as well as of English and Burgher children, has been matter of great anxiety and considerable expense. There is very little hearty support to be found at first for an Institution of this kind, though the need of it is universally acknowledged. But now we hope it may be regarded as fairly floated. The same may be said of the girls' (day) school, of the same grade, at Kurunegala. This has been carried through the anxious time by the indefatigable zeal and personal labour of Mrs. Hancock, and is now likely to be permanent. But even the longest established and best supported of all these high class girls' schools, Bishopsgate House, Colombo, is hardly more than barely self-supporting ; though under Mrs. Drew's excellent management it has returned to at least its old efficiency and numbers. The importance of the Christian education of the native ladies cannot be over-rated. Their influence over sons and husbands in the matter of religion is very great ; and they generally cling to the old religion with more earnestness than the men.

The Tamil work under Archdeacon Matthew in Kandy is encouraging ; there have been many Baptisms. The English congregation is very satisfactory ; daily Services are fairly attended ; a parochial Guild has been founded.

I will next mention St. Thomas' College. Since my last letter we have lost the Warden, the Rev. J. Bacon, whose death deprived the College of one to whom it owes, in great measure, its present efficiency. His eldest boy is a candidate for election to the Clergy Orphan Asylum, and I warmly commend him to the votes of any of the Associates who may be electors.

Our present Warden, the Rev. E. C. Miller, is infusing great energy and a spirit of regularity into the College and School, and does not despair of seeing that which is so strange to the Sinhalese, punctuality, the rule of the place. Much better than this, he is determined to treat the work as a Missionary work, and has separate instructions for Christians, catechumens, and heathens. From this distinction, not liked at first, I expect much good. He is also by degrees reviving the Sinhalese Orphanage for boys, which is attached to the College. A somewhat similar Orphanage for girls is needed, and Miss Callander, who is now most usefully employed in Mrs. Drew's School, but yearns

for more exclusively "native" work, is to have part in the care of it.

The Associates will be glad to hear that the new church, St. James', Kotahena, has been valued and attended by increasing congregations,—daily Service is held there, and the Rev. C. David labours up to and beyond his strength. He has been, I am sorry to say, very unwell of late. The Schools go on fairly, the girls' school very well,—the boys' school is still smaller than I could wish.

The Rev. T. Christian is getting on with his little Church at Kurena, as his neighbours at Negombo are with theirs.

To dash across to the opposite side of the island for a moment, the little Christian community at Navatcudar, near Batticaloa, are still waiting for their church. I have been unable to visit them since my first tour in that direction, but when I do go, I trust it will be started. Funds are still wanted for this.

At Kalutara the Rev. R. H. Duthy and the Rev. J. C. M. Ogilvie are working on faithfully: theirs is a hard post. They have not been at all well supported, I am sorry to say, by their richer people; even the small stipend of £100 a year between them—which is all they ask, having £150 from the Diocesan Fund,—has not been fully paid. Still they have the confidence of their people and good or fair congregations. But, unhappily, in Ceylon there is an ungenerous readiness to accept, without paying for it, everything that can be got, and the Kalutara people presume on the self-sacrificing spirit of their clergy. In their household, Messrs Duthy and Ogilvie have been training in the ways of a life of disciplined simplicity and devotion four or five young men, mostly new converts, and several boys, whom they have taught and baptized. This is not a showy work, and it is one which involves great trials, and some sad disappointments, but I am convinced it will have a blessing proportioned to the effort. They have several schools under the care of the teachers, who live with them, and in one the clergy themselves teach daily. These home ties prevent their doing much at present outside Kalutara and its immediate neighbourhood; but they hope soon to be able to undertake evangelistic tours in their district. Their powers are further lessened by Mr. Ogilvie's having to go to Ratnapura once a month, a journey of two days each way. This is a burden of which I hope he may be relieved, especially as Ratnapura sadly wants a resident clergyman.

There is a nucleus of Christians there, and an immense Missionary field around. The little church is nearly finished, but, for want of more frequent ministrations, the flock have been in danger of falling away to the sect of Baptists, who, however, do us good service, for, whenever any place is neglected, they plant themselves there, as if to warn us of the necessity of attending to our work.

The Rev. J. S. Lyle, emancipated at last from Chaplain's work, and from a series of temporary appointments, has got to the Missionary work which was always his heart's desire, and at Weligama, 17 miles south of Galle, has started work in earnest, assisted by Mr. Henly. They, like their brethren at Kalutara, have a household,—in fact a boys' School of twelve boarders,—lads from the families of the higher ranks in the Southern Province, and the teachers in this and in the village schools live with them.

In both these homes the whole party live, dine, and sleep together in as nearly as possible the native way. At Weligama bread, meat, and beer, are seldom or never seen, and yet, *experto crede*, at any rate when the Bishop is there, the variety of vegetable and fish curries supplies an excellent table. There is the sea to bathe in, sands to walk on, a good place for lawn-tennis or cricket,—and, in short, all that boys need to be as happy as the day is long. In the village and neighbourhood the Church is rapidly spreading; a few good Christian families have supported Mr. Lyle's efforts, and he has been able to baptize several, and has a number of catechumens. Funds and labourers are wanting, the harvest is waiting to be reaped. Mr. Lyle is for the present superintending the work of Buona Vista, between Weligama and Galle, during the absence on leave of the Rev. P. Marks. I hope to see the latter return soon, with funds for building his church, of which the foundation has been so long laid, and with a stock of renewed strength and faith to carry on his excellent work. Mrs. Marks' place in the Orphanage has been taken by Miss Kohlhoff, a trained teacher and daughter of an Indian Missionary, in whose hands we hope the work will not have fallen off at all when Mrs. Marks returns.

Now I must stop. I seem only to have touched on a few points, and not to have gone deep enough into anything to get to the real interest; but when people are willing to be interested, as I know my readers are, they are sure to find matter for sympathy and prayer.

Let me end with words of the great English Missionary St. Boniface. "Knowing my own littleness, I am the more earnest to implore you with the tenderness of brotherly love to remember me in your prayers; that I may be delivered from the snares of the fowler, * * * and 'that the word of God may have free course and be glorified.' Pray, with a sense of pity for their need, for those * * who are yet pagans, that God and our Lord Jesus Christ, 'Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,' may turn their hearts to the Catholic faith, that they may recover themselves from the wiles of the devil, by which they are held captive, and be numbered with the children of the Church, our holy mother. * * * Deal therefore so with my request that your crowns of reward may grow bright and increase in the angels' court above, and as the communion of your love shall flourish and advance in Christ, may the Almighty Creator keep and preserve it ever more." ¹

I remain,

Your grateful Servant in Christ,

R. S. COLOMBO.

¹ Quoted in Churton's "Early English Church," p. 158.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS.

N.B.—The following Balance Sheet was made out by the Bishop just before his return to England. He at first intended that it should be circulated at once, together with a few words from him, stating the objects for which further contributions were needed; but this was postponed, owing to the pressure of work during his short stay in England. The Bishop has now requested that this Statement of Accounts be appended to the above letter. By his desire is added also an acknowledgment of the various sums received during his visit to this country, and of those previously paid into the Oxford Old Bank; all which sums have since been sent out to Ceylon.

BISHOP OF COLOMBO'S SPECIAL FUND.

ACCOUNT OF SUBSCRIPTIONS,

JULY 1877 to JULY 1878.

RECEIPTS.

	Rupees.
Proceeds of Subscriptions forwarded by Miss Copleston, Nov. 1877, amounting to £75 17s.	861.73
Proceeds of Bills per Child & Co., Jan. 1878, which included Subscriptions by Miss Copleston, £10 11s. 0½d., Offertory at Shoreham, Sussex, St. Andrew's Day, £5 8s., Offertories at All Saints', Edmonton, Feast of the Epiphany and First Sunday after, £28 18s. 10½d., amounting to £44 17s. 11d.	519.31
By Rev. J. C. M. Ogilvie, £5	56.75
St. Giles, Oxford, per S.P.G. £5	56.75
Rev. W. M. Richardson 10s.	5.67
Deficit	9.29
	<u>1509.50</u>

EXPENDITURE.

	Rupees.
Paid Navatcudar Fund	59.50
Tangalla Buildings	250.00
Weligama Site	500.00
Kurena Church	250.00
Batticaloa School Repairs	150.00
Ratnapura	300.00
	<u>1509.50</u>

SUMS NOW IN HAND, RECEIVED IN PART DURING THE BISHOP'S VISIT TO ENGLAND.

Various sums paid into the Bishop's Fund at the Oxford Old Bank during 1877-78, which, through an oversight, were not sent out to Ceylon	£	s.	d.
Subscriptions received by Miss Copleston since Jan., 1878	3	3	6
Offertory SS. Philip and James', Oxford	3	0	0
" S. Paul's, Brighton	16	0	0
" S. Stephen's House, Oxford	1	17	6
" All Saints', Edmonton	19	11	0
" S. Gabriel's, Pimlico	4	1	8
" S. Paul's, St. Leonards	18	3	11
" S. Saviour's, Hoxton (for Kotahena School)	4	0	0
Rev. Charles and Mrs. Robinson	10	0	0
Mrs. W. J. Copleston	5	0	0
Miss Bellamy	10	10	0
Rev. E. C. Dermer	1	0	0
J. S.	1	0	0
Children's Mission Regiment, SS. Philip and James', Oxford	1	0	0
Rev. T. Rivington	5	0	0
For Harmonium at Matara, by Miss E. M. Wrottesley	15	15	0
G. F. Gresley, Esq., for Kurena Church	1	0	0
Miss Freeman	1	0	0



