

MISCELLANEOUS.

A REPRESENTATIVE HINDU.

The pioneer in America of those Indian teachers who have to some extent familiarized Western minds with the religious conceptions of the far East was Mohini Chatterji, an eloquent barrister, who visited America in the eighties. Then came the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893, which did so much to bring Eastern thought home to us; and there the striking figure and the fervid and elegant eloquence of Swami Vivekananda secured for him a respectful and interested attention which later followed him in his journeying to many other parts of this country. These have been followed by others, whose dark-skinned, turbaned, yellow-robed figures have become quite familiar to us; and to these visitors from beyond the seas we owe much in the way of more liberal thought—broader, more generous, and not unfrequently more Christ-like views of men and things.

Following the long procession of Indian teachers which has sought our shores during the past score of years, one whose position, attainments, and character are such as to cast a lustre upon all who preceded him, is expected to visit us during the coming summer. It is to make this fact known to your readers, that those who wish may avail themselves of the opportunity of meeting him, and that a fitting tribute of respect and honor may be paid by us to a really great man, that I am preparing the present paper. The person to whom I refer is the Honorable P. Ramanáthan, K. C., C. M. G., Solicitor General of Ceylon.

Mr. Ramanáthan is a man thoroughly representative of the Indian Nation, both in its external, material, and its inner, spiritual, aspects, in a higher degree, perhaps, than any one who has hitherto visited America from that land. His family is one of the oldest of Southern India and has long been the leading family of the Indian race in the Island of Ceylon. He himself was the representative of his people in the Legislative Council from 1879-1892, and was sent to England to represent them at the last anniversary festival in honor of Queen Victoria. Since 1892 he has been Solicitor General of the Colony. He has large wealth, has received a European as well as an Indian education, and is a man of sound knowledge and culture in the learning of both the East and the West.

It is the spiritual side of life, however, which in India is regarded as of chief importance—in fact as of sole importance. Sergeant Ballentyne, a famous English barrister, once went to India to defend a maharaja charged with murder. After traveling extensively over the country he is said to have

remarked that while there might be in some of the languages of India a word for *comfort*, he had not heard of it, nor had he found the article. The observation was well founded. Comfort is a despised word in India; for worldly comfort is esteemed to withdraw one from the Lord. I have myself had ample opportunity to note, during a somewhat protracted residence among the Hindus, that the end of life sought by them is not enjoyment, material or intellectual, but spiritual growth; and one who gains confidential relations with them soon learns that the most cherished hope of every intelligent man is to withdraw during middle age to a mode of life wherein, to repeat an expression which I had frequently heard them use, he "can think only of God."

It is with reference to the spiritual aspects of life, however, that Mr. Ramanáthan is pre-eminently representative of India. His repute as a man of wisdom—of spiritual illumination—is very great among his countrymen. Those who know him well, indeed, regard him as one of those sages who have endowed India with the mysterious majesty of Spiritual Wisdom—as, in short, a *Brahma-jnani* or knower of God. For in India there is commonly understood by Hindus—not, indeed, by most Europeans—to be a science quite unknown, quite undreamt of, by the "progressive" West, namely the science of *jnánam* or Spiritual Wisdom; a science which has to do solely with spiritual things, which deals with the principles which underlie both the visible and the invisible worlds, which is based upon actual and immediate knowledge of the spirit, of God.

Edward Carpenter's *From Adam's Peak to Elephanta* treats intelligently and entertainingly this interesting and, in the West, little understood subject. Of this book a distinguished native of India has said that it contains "the only Western account of India that shows a knowledge of the great under-currents of Indian life." (P. Arunachalam, District Judge at Kurunegale, Ceylon, in a paper entitled "Luminous Sleep," *Westminster Review*, September, 1902.) See also Max Müller's admirable *Life of Ramakrishna*, generally reputed in India to have been a *jnani*.

Men who have mastered this science of knowing God are called *Brahma-jnanis*. They are reputed to have attained to that stage of development—of evolution—where they are able by interior perception to gain direct knowledge of spiritual realities. These men represent for the Hindu the culmination, the full development of human life. They alone are esteemed to be genuine teachers and real guides, who cannot err. For they alone perceive the spiritual foundation upon which the material world rests.

The *jnánis* stand for the highest and most sacred ideas of the Indian civilization—for all that is finest, noblest, and purest in it. They are the efflorescence of the life of the nation, the life of the nation as a whole, not any sect, creed or division of it. To them all external religious forms are alike. The Brahmin, the Buddhist, the Christian, the Mohammedan or the Agnostic are to them the same. Development of character and aptitude for receiving spiritual instruction are the only credentials which they regard. The most enlightened men of India have always gone and still go to the *jnánis* when seeking spiritual light; for, it is said, they can always be found by earnest seekers for truth. Still, as of old, their prayer is:

"O Saint, teach us, for thou art the way, and there is no other for us.
O Saint, thou art the way, thou art the way."

Maitrayana Upanishad.

It is such a man that Mr. Ramanáthan is reputed to be among his countrymen who know him well; and whatever we may think of the claim, the fact that it is made is a most interesting and suggestive fact; since it shows that he is esteemed by them to be a representative of the highest spiritual achievement which can be attained by men.

Mr. Ramanáthan has made an extensive and critical study of the Christian Scriptures, and has written exhaustive commentaries on the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John, and a portion of the Psalms of David. (The two Gospel Commentaries, published in London, may be obtained of H. W. Percival, 244 Lenox Avenue, New York. The Commentary on the Psalms is not yet published; a copy is in the possession of the writer.) These commentaries are in the highest degree sympathetic and reverent; and as the author has been from his youth imbued with the ideas of Indian civilization and is wholly loyal to them and to the Indian scriptures, his interpretation of the Christian Scriptures is essentially a harmonization of the two religious systems. He finds in the teachings of the Old and the New Testaments the leading doctrines of the sages of India, as these are laid down in the great Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and other sacred writings in Tamil and Sanskrit.

It was through a friend who knew him, and these published commentaries, that, in the year 1901, I first learned of Mr. Ramanáthan; and I made the journey to India chiefly for the purpose of meeting him. My acquaintance with him resulted in my studying with him the underlying principles of religion for upwards of a year. I found him to be possessed of great powers of exposition, and by far the most spiritually illuminating teacher I have ever known. The most striking point in his character is the breadth and liberality of his view. As he knows but one God, so he regards all religious systems as equally paths to Him, each adapted to the differing needs of various portions of mankind, each a facet of the One Religion which is the essence of all. He seeks unification of form in recognition of identity of substance. The sincere Hindu and the sincere Christian are to him the same, since both are worshippers of the Lord.

Realizing the great good which Mr. Ramanáthan could do in America, especially because of his extremely reverent and sympathetic feeling toward Christianity, in the matter of establishing the unity of Faith and promoting the cause of Universal Brotherhood, I suggested to him that he should make us a visit—a suggestion which, somewhat to my surprise but very greatly to my satisfaction, he considered favorably, and has proceeded to make his plans to visit this country during the present year.

A number of circumstances combine to warrant the expectation that considerable results may follow this visit. Mr. Ramanáthan's perfect mastery of the English as well as his native language, and his extensive acquaintance with the science and literature of the West as well as of the East, fit him to be a more perfect interpreter of the one to the other than any one who has preceded him. Further, Mr. Ramanáthan's distinguished position as second law officer of the crown and as the recognized leader of the Tamil race in Ceylon, and his large wealth, are, in a measure, guarantees for the sincerity of his efforts. Moreover, he is a very winning and attractive speaker, and a man of great charm of manner and personal character. He is therefore,

I think, exceptionally qualified to secure the attention, respect, and affectionate regard of Americans.

But undoubtedly Mr. Ramanáthan's strongest claim to respectful and attentive hearing in the West is the fact that a man of his distinction among the people of India should have undertaken a careful and extensive examination and exposition of the Christian Scriptures. His views have more than a merely scholastic interest, since the general respect and regard in which he is held insure for them a wide-spread influence among his countrymen and make possible practical results which may even reach international importance. It is well known to those familiar with Indian life that hitherto the influence of the West, as represented by Christian missionary efforts, has had an almost inappreciable effect upon the life and thought of India. This influence has been limited to that small fraction of the enormous population of the country which comes in contact, chiefly in the large centers of population, with the European or Western element; while the deep religious life of the masses of the people flows on in a mighty current, feeling and knowing nothing of Western thought. It is therefore a remarkably impressive fact, as indicating the high estimation in which Mr. Ramanáthan is held among his people as a spiritual teacher, the cogency of his interpretation of the Western Scriptures, and the value and probable results of his work, that, since his commentaries appeared, orthodox Indian pundits have actually undertaken to translate the Gospels of St. John and St. Matthew, following Mr. Ramanáthan's interpretation, into the Indian vernacular, in order that they may be carefully read and studied by the people of India. Hitherto, it should be remembered, the Bible has been a sealed book to them, since the missionary translations have no value for orthodox Hindus.

Thus a direction is pointed out for really bringing the thought of the East and the West into harmony and co-operation, more hopeful than any which has hitherto been suggested. It is much to be hoped that the Christian Church of the West may be led to meet these generous and broad-minded advances in the spirit in which they are proffered; in the spirit indeed already shown by that most whole-souled and liberal man, Dr. Charles Cuthbert Hall, President of the Union Theological Seminary, who recently delivered in India the lectures provided by the Barrows foundation, wherein he announced as his platform the absolute and cordial brotherhood of the adherents of the Western and Eastern faiths. Thus may be inaugurated a movement for a nearer approach to unification of the religious systems of the world than has before seemed possible; a unification, that is based, not upon the desertion by some of their religion, but upon the better understanding on the part of each of the ideals of the others, and the perception that the essentials of true religion are in fact identical, however different external names and forms may be.

It must be admitted by those who are familiar with Indian life that Christian influence in the East has in reality been, not only in extent, but in quality and beneficial effect, far from what it has been supposed to be by those who have lent it their support. It is certainly true that human nature is so constituted that when man's religious ideals are once disturbed, those by which they may be replaced are likely to be so insecurely rooted in his nature as to have little determining effect upon his character or future career.

Still more serious, however, is the fact that the influences brought to

bear to secure a change of faith on the part of the natives of India are largely appeals to their desire for material advancement. Employment, both under the English Government and that controlled by Westerners resident in India, is frequently dependent upon religious affiliations. This state of affairs has produced a class of time-serving Hindus, which embraces most of the so-called Christian converts in the country, who have, nominally at least, repudiated their inherited faith and formally adopted Christianity for the purpose of securing worldly advantages. These unfortunate people have lost the sustaining moral influences of their native religion without securing any efficient substitute for it. Consequently they are, as a class, although nominally Christians, quite without moral basis of character.

I have myself lived for a considerable time among the Hindus, maintaining a domestic establishment, and have found it practically impossible to secure English speaking servants who are honest. There are indeed plenty of honest servants to be had, but they do not speak English, and have not been subjected to the demoralizing influences to which I have referred.

If therefore it be possible, as Mr. Ramanáthan's efforts and the success which has already attended them indicate that it is, to direct the energies which are now devoted to spreading Christian ideals into channels which shall attain that object without disturbing the religious convictions of those to whom they are addressed, much will be gained, not only in the effectiveness of the appeal, but in its results as regards the character of those who are influenced; while above all the unification of mankind, the recognition of the undoubted fact that under all names and forms and creeds there is but one Religion, as there is but one God in the universe and in the hearts of men, will be brought appreciably nearer.

Mr. Ramanáthan is expected to arrive in this country about the middle of July. During the remainder of the summer he will be the guest of the Green Acre Fellowship at Eliot, Maine, where he will deliver a number of courses of addresses on "The Unity of Faith" and kindred topics, and be freely accessible to all who wish to meet him.

In the Fall Mr. Ramanáthan will reside for some time in or near New York, and later will visit some of the principal cities of the country. He may be addressed in the care of the British Consulate, New York City.

The writer will be glad to furnish inquirers with further information about Green Acre and its resources as a place for summer residence, and may be addressed at the Union League Club, New York City.

MYRON H. PHELPS.

[In comment on Mr. Phelps's communication we express our satisfaction at the prospect of Mr. Ramanáthan's visit to this country. We have not yet been in any direct connection with him, but are acquainted with his books on the Christian Scriptures and know of his prominent position in Ceylon. It is highly desirable that men of Mr. Ramanáthan's stamp and influence should not only know the West, its institutions, church-life, universities, etc., but also be known in the West. India, Ceylon, and other Eastern countries are now passing through a crisis which has been caused by contact with Western civilization, and the way in which the problems that arise from this crisis are to be solved cannot be a matter of indifference to us. Mr. Ramanáthan who has, to some extent at least, solved the problem to his own satis-

faction, is a recognized leader in his country. Under Western influence he has modified his views as well as his Oriental garb, but he has not ceased to be a Hindu. It is by no means impossible that we shall have to greet him as the truest and best representative of the India of the future.—ED.]

EXPLORATION IN EGYPT.

AN AMERICAN SOCIETY TO DO THE WORK.

To the Editor of The Open Court:

In October 1902 a Boston committee was formed to conduct the affairs of the entire American Branch of the Egypt Exploration Fund. It has utterly failed to induce the subscribers as a body, and the eighty local secretaries, to renew subscriptions and to enlist any considerable support, notwithstanding paid advertising, the distribution of many circulars, and earnest personal work. At the annual meeting in November in London, lamentations went up over the enormous defection of American subscribers. Probably nine-tenths of the subscribers on the rolls of 1900-1902 failed to renew. Not willing to recognize the handwriting on the wall, this Boston Committee is now trying to form committees of its friends in a few large centers, who will solicit and forward funds for the work, not to London, but to Boston, which will credit them as by or through the Boston Committee and then forward the same to the London Committee. A New York circular being sent out reads as if its small local committee was directly connected with the London Committee, whereas its committee is created by that in Boston, to whom the funds collected are sent!

In view of these and other facts to be stated, the time is ripe for an American society which can manage its own affairs, select its agents for the field, and go ahead, without, however, any antagonism to any foreign society. The advantages are chiefly that to America would fall the glory of original discovery and work, and there would be no sharing of the "antiquities" taken from Egypt.

The other facts are these. In 1883 the American branch was founded by Rev. William Copley Winslow, Ph.D., LL.D., of Boston. He devoted himself to building up the society. Its receipts at times exceeded those of the English Committee from all over the Empire. He had suggested some sort of a committee to work with him. He had named eminent members in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, who as a nucleus could by conferring with the local secretaries and other subscribers form a national and most representative committee. But what did the London Committee do and how did they do it? The Rev. Dr. E. P. Wright of Milwaukee stated in *The Living Church* these clearly established facts:

1. That the American Branch was reorganized by the London Committee without consulting the hundreds of members and eighty or more local secretaries, and against the protest of many of them.

2. That previous official assurances from London, such as that "in any reorganization of the American Branch the approval of American subscribers is essential," were violated.

3. That the London Committee, itself a body elected annually, probably exceeded its legal powers in *thus* forming, or causing to be formed, a committee to direct the affairs of a large portion of the entire society.