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(East India Affairs.)

Grant
on
Asiatic
Society
1792

OBSERVATIONS

On the State of Society among the *Asiatic* Subjects of
Great Britain, particularly with respect to Morals;
and on the means of improving it.—Written chiefly
in the Year 1792.

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be printed,
15 June 1813.

APPENDIX.

Extract from the Transactions of the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, for the year 1795.

“ ANOTHER letter has been received from Mr. Swartz, dated at Tanjore, February 13th, 1794, which being of a particularly interesting nature, the Society judge fit to produce at length. As moreover the Society, after forty years experience, have had constant reason to approve of Mr. Swartz’s integrity and veracity as a correspondent, his zeal as a promoter of Christian knowledge, and his labours as a missionary, they take this opportunity of acknowledging his faithful services, and recommending his letter to the consideration of the Public, as containing a just statement of facts relating to the mission, believing that Mr. Swartz is incapable of departing from the truth, in the minutest particular.”

Appendix.

To the Reverend Dr. GASKIN, Secretary to the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

Tanjore, February 13, 1794.

AS His Majesty’s seventy-fourth regiment is partly stationed at Tanjore, and partly at Vallam, six English miles distant from Tanjore, we commonly go once in a week to Vallam, to perform divine service to four companies of that regiment.

When I lately went to that place, the 210th number of a newspaper, called the Courier, Friday evening, May 24th, 1793, was communicated to me.

In that paper I found a paragraph, delivered by Mr. Montgomerie Campbell (who came out to India with Sir Archibald Campbell, in the station of a private secretary) wherein my name was mentioned in the following manner:

“ Mr. Montgomerie Campbell gave his decided vote against the clause, and reprobated the idea of converting the Gentoo. It is true, missionaries have made proselytes of the Parriars; but they were the lowest order of people, and had even degraded the religion they professed to embrace.

“ Mr. Swartz, whose character was held so deservedly high, could not have any reason to boast of the purity of his followers: they were proverbial for their profligacy. An instance occurred to his recollection, perfectly in point;—he had been preaching for many hours to this caste of proselytes, on the heinousness of theft, and in the heat of his discourse, taken off his stock, when that and his gold buckle were stolen by one of his virtuous and enlightened congregation. In such a description of natives, did the doctrine of the missionaries operate. Men of high caste would spurn at the idea of changing the religion of their ancestors.”

As this paragraph is found in a public paper, I thought it would not displease the Honourable Society to make a few observations on it; not to boast (which I detest) but to declare the plain truth, and to defend my brethren and myself.

About seventeen years ago, when I resided at Tiruchinapally, I visited the congregation at Tanjore. In my road, I arrived very early at a village which is inhabited by *Collaries*, a set of people who are infamous for stealing; even the name of a *Collary* (or better, *Kullen*) signifieth a thief.

These *Collaries* make nightly excursions, in order to rob. They drive away bullocks and sheep, and whatever they can find; for which outrage, they annually pay fifteen hundred chakr, or seven hundred and fifty pagodas, to the Rajah.

Of this caste of people, many live in the Tanjore country, still more in Tondiman’s country, and likewise in the Nabob’s country.

When I arrived at one of those villages, called *Pudaloor*, I took off my stock, putting it upon a sand-bank. Advancing a little to look out for the man who carried my linen clothes, I was regardless of the stock, at which time, some thievish boys took it away. Not one grown person was present. When the inhabitants heard of the theft, they desired me to confine all those boys, and to punish them as severely as I pleased.

But I refused to do that, not thinking that the trifle which I had lost was worth so much trouble.

That such boys, whose fathers are professed thieves, should commit a theft, can be no matter of wonder.

All the inhabitants of that village were Heathens; not one Christian family was found therein.

Many of our gentlemen, travelling through that village, have been robbed.

Appendix.

The trifle of a buckle I did therefore not lose *by a Christian*, as Mr. Montgomerie Campbell will have it, but by Heathen boys.

Neither did I preach at that time: Mr. Montgomerie Campbell says that I preached two hours: I did not so much as converse with any man.

This poor story totally misrepresented, is alleged by Mr. Montgomerie Campbell to prove the profligacy of Christians, whom he called, with a sneer, virtuous and enlightened people.

If Mr. Montgomerie Campbell has no better proof, his conclusion is built upon a bad foundation, and I shall not admire his logic: truth is against him.

Neither is it true, that the best part of those people who have been instructed, are *Parriars*. Had Mr. Montgomerie Campbell visited, even once, our church, he would have observed that *more than two thirds were of the higher caste*; and so is it at Tranquebar and Vepery.

Our intention is not to boast; but this I may safely say, that many of those people who have been instructed, have left this world with comfort, and with a well-grounded hope of everlasting life.

That some of those who have been instructed and baptized, have abused the benefit of instruction, is certain. But all sincere servants of God, nay even the Apostles, have experienced this grief.

It is asserted, that a missionary is a disgrace to any country. Lord Macartney, and the late General Crote, would have entertained a very different opinion. They, and many other gentlemen, know and acknowledge, that the missionaries have been beneficial to government, and a comfort to the country.

This I am able to prove, in the strongest manner. Many gentlemen who live now in England, and in this country, would corroborate my assertion.

That the Reverend Mr. Gerické has been of eminent service to Cuddalore, every gentleman, who was at Cuddalore at the time when the war broke out, knows. He was the instrument, in the hands of Providence, by which Cuddalore was saved from plunder and bloodshed.

He saved many gentlemen from becoming prisoners to Hyder, which Lord Macartney kindly acknowledged.

When Nagapatnam, that rich and popular city, fell into the deepest poverty, by the unavoidable consequences of war, Mr. Gerické behaved like a father to the distressed people of that city. He forgot that he had a family to provide for. Many impoverished families were supported by him; so that when I, a few months ago, preached and administered the sacrament in that place, I saw many who owed their, and their childrens' lives, to his disinterested care. Surely this, my friend, could not be called a disgrace to that place. When the Honourable Society ordered him to attend the congregation at Madras, all lamented his departure. And at Madras, he is esteemed by the governor, and many other gentlemen, to this day.

It is a most disagreeable task to speak of oneself. However, I hope that the Honourable Society will not look upon some observations which I am to make, as a vain and sinful boasting, but rather as a necessary self-defence. Neither the missionaries, nor many of the Christians, have hurt the welfare of the country.

In the time of war, the fort of Tanjore was in a distressed condition. A powerful enemy was near; the people in the Fort, numerous; and not provision even for the garrison. There was grain enough in the country, but we had no bullocks to bring it into the Fort. When the country people formerly brought paddy (rice in the husk) into the Fort, the rapacious dubashes deprived them of their due pay. Hence all confidence was lost; so that the inhabitants drove away their cattle, refusing to assist the Fort. The late Rajah ordered, nay intreated the people, by his managers, to come and help us; but all was in vain.

At last the Rajah said to one of our principal gentlemen: "We all, you and I, have lost our credit; let us try whether the inhabitants will trust Mr. Swartz." Accordingly he sent me a blank paper, empowering me to make a proper agreement with the people. Here was no time for hesitation. The seapoys fell down as dead people, being emaciated with hunger; our streets were lined with dead corpses every morning; our condition was deplorable. I sent, therefore, letters, every where round about, promising to pay any one, with my own hands; and to pay them for any bullock which might be taken by the enemy. In one or two days, I got above a thousand bullocks, and sent one of our catechists, and other Christians, into the country. They went at the risk of their lives, made all possible haste, and brought into the Fort, in a very short time, eighty thousand kalams (of rice.) By this means, the Fort was saved. When all was over, I paid the people (even with some money which belonged to others) made them a small present, and sent them home.

The next year, when Colonel Braithwaite, with his whole detachment, was taken prisoner, Major Alcock commanded this Fort, and behaved very kindly to the poor starving people. We were then, the second time, in the same miserable condition. The enemy always invaded the country when the harvest was nigh at hand. I was again desired to try my former expedient, and succeeded. The people knew that they were not to be deprived of their pay, they therefore came with their cattle. But now the danger was greater, as the enemy was very near. The Christians conducted the inhabitants to proper places, surely with no small danger of losing their lives. Accordingly they wept, and went, and supplied the Fort with grain. When the inhabitants were paid, I strictly enquired whether any of the Christians had taken from them a present. They all said, No, no; as we were so regularly paid, we offered to your catechist a cloth of small value, but he absolutely refused it.

But

But Mr. Montgomerie Campbell says, that the Christians are profligate to a proverb.

If Mr. Montgomerie Campbell was near me, I would explain to him who are the profligate people who drain the country. When a dubash, in the space of ten or fifteen years, scrapes together two, three, or four lacks of pagodas, is not this extortion a high degree of profligacy?

Nay, government was obliged to send an order, that three of those Gentoo dubashes should quit the Tanjore country. The enormous crimes committed by them, filled the country with complaints; but I have no mind to enumerate them.

It is asserted, that the inhabitants of the country would suffer by missionaries.

If the missionaries are sincere Christians, it is impossible that the inhabitants should suffer any damage by them. If they are not what they profess to be, they ought to be dismissed.

When Sir Archibald Campbell was governor, and Mr. Montgomerie Campbell his private secretary, the inhabitants of the Tanjore country were so miserably oppressed by the managers and the Madras dubashes, that they quitted the country: of course, all cultivation ceased. In the month of June, the cultivation should commence; but nothing was done, even at the beginning of September. Every one dreaded the calamity of a famine. I entreated the Rajah to remove that shameful oppression, and to recall the inhabitants. He sent them word, that justice should be done to them; but they disbelieved his promises. He then desired me to write to them, and to assure them, that he, at my intercession, would show kindness to them. I did so. All immediately returned; and first of all, the Kallar (or as they are commonly called, Collaries) believed my word, so that seven thousand men came back on one day. The other inhabitants followed their example. When I exhorted them to exert themselves to the utmost, because the time for cultivation was almost lost, they replied in the following manner: "As you have showed kindness to us, you shall not have reason to repent of it; we intend to work night and day, to show our regard for you."

Sir Archibald Campbell was happy when he heard it; and we had the satisfaction of having a better crop than the preceding year.

As there was hardly any administration of justice, I begged and entreated the Rajah to establish justice in his country. "Well," said he, "let me know wherein my people are oppressed." I did so. He immediately consented to my proposal, and told his manager, that he should feel his indignation, if the oppression did not cease immediately. But as he soon died, he did not see the execution.

When the present Rajah began his reign, I put Sir Archibald Campbell in mind of that necessary point. He desired me to make a plan for a court of justice, which I did; but it was soon neglected by the servants of the Rajah, who commonly sold justice to the best bidder.

When the Honourable Company took possession of the country, during the war, the plan for introducing justice was re-assumed; by which many people were made happy. But when the country was restored to the Rajah, the former irregularities took place.

During the assumption, government desired me to assist the gentlemen collectors. The district towards the west of Tanjore had been very much neglected, so that the water-courses had not been cleansed for the last fifteen years. I proposed that the collector should advance five hundred pagodas to cleanse those water-courses. The gentlemen consented if I would inspect the business. The work was begun and finished, being inspected by Christians. All that part of the country rejoiced in getting one hundred thousand collums (of rice) more than before. The inhabitants confessed, that instead of one collum, they now reaped four.

No inhabitant has suffered by Christians; none has complained of it. On the contrary, one of the richest inhabitants said to me; "Sir, if you send a person to us, send us one who has learned all your ten commandments;" for he, and many hundred inhabitants, had been present when I explained the Christian doctrine to Heathens and Christians.

The inhabitants dread the conduct of a Madras dubash. These people lend money to the Rajah, at an exorbitant interest, and then are permitted to collect their money and interest, in an appointed district. It is needless to mention the consequences.

When the Collaries committed great outrages in their plundering expeditions, Sepoys were sent out to adjust matters; but it had no effect. Government desired me to inquire into that thievish business. I therefore sent letters to the head Collaries; they appeared; we found out, in some degree, how much the Tanjore, and Tondaman's, and the Nabob's Collaries had stolen; and we insisted upon restoration, which was done accordingly. At last, all gave it in writing, that they would steal no more. This promise they kept very well for eight months, and then they began their old work; however, not as before. Had that inspection over their conduct been continued, they might have been made useful people. I insisted upon (their) cultivating their fields, which they really did. But if the demands become exorbitant, they have no resource they think, but that of plundering.

At last some of those thievish Collaries desired to be instructed. I said, "I am obliged to instruct you; but I am afraid that you will become very bad Christians." Their promises were fair. I instructed them; and when they had a tolerable knowledge, I baptized them. Having baptized them, I exhorted them to steal no more, but to work industriously. After that, I visited them; and having examined their knowledge, I desired to see their work. I observed, with pleasure, that their fields were excellently cultivated. "Now," said I, "one thing remains to be done. You must pay your tribute readily, and not wait till it is exacted by military force," which otherwise is their custom. Soon after that, I found that they had paid off their tribute exactly.

Appendix.

The only complaint against those Christian Collarics was, that they refused to go upon plundering expeditions, as they had done before.

Now I am well aware, that some will accuse me of having boasted. I confess the charge willingly, but lay all the blame upon those who have constrained me to commit that folly.

I might have enlarged my account; but fearing that some characters would have suffered by it, I stop here.

One thing, however, I affirm, before God and man, that if Christianity, in its plain and undisguised form, was properly promoted, the country would not suffer, but be benefited by it.

If Christians were employed in some important offices, they should, if they misbehaved, be doubly punished; but to reject them entirely, is not right, and discourageth.

The glorious God, and our blessed Redeemer, has commanded his Apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations.

The knowledge of God, and his divine perfections, and of his mercy to mankind, may be abused; but there is no other method of reclaiming mankind, than by instructing them well. To hope that the Heathens will live a good life, without the knowledge of God, is a chimera.

The praise bestowed on the Heathens of this country, by many of our historians, is refuted by a close (I might almost say, superficial) inspection of their lives. Many historical works are more like a romance than history. Many gentlemen here are astonished, how some historians have prostituted their talents by writing fables.

I am now at the brink of eternity; but to this moment I declare, that I do not repent of having spent forty-three years in the service of my Divine Master. Who knows but God may remove some of the great obstacles to the propagation of the Gospel? Should a reformation take place amongst the Europeans, it would no doubt be the greatest blessing to the country.

These observations I beg leave to lay before the Honourable Society, with my humble thanks for all their benefits bestowed on this work, and sincere wishes that their pious and generous endeavours to disseminate the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, may be beneficial to many thousands.

I am sincerely,

Reverend and Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Brother, and humble Servant,

C. F. SWARTZ.