THE READER.

SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 1856.

HOW TO CIVILIZE SAVAGES.

Our missionaries really produce on savages an effect proportionate to the time, money, and energy expended! Are the degrees of our Church adapted to people in a state of barbarism, and in all stages of mental development? Does the fact of a particular form of religion taking root, and maintaining itself among a people, depend in any way upon—upon those deep-seated mental and moral peculiarities which distinguish the European or Aryan races from the negro or the Australian savage? Can the savage be mentally, morally, and physically improved, without the instruction of the tenets of a dogmatic theology? These are a few of the interesting questions that were discussed, however imperfectly, at the last meeting of the Anthropological Society, when the Bishop of Natal read his paper on "On the Efforts of Missionaries Among Savages," and on some of those questions we propose to make a few observations.

If the history of mankind teaches us one thing more clearly than another, it is this—that true civilization and a true religion are algebraic in the slow growth of ages, and both are inextricably connected with the struggles and development of the human mind. They have ever in their infancy been watered with tears and blood—they have had to suffer the rude providence of war and persecution; they have withstood the frantic cries of anarchy, of despoticism, and of neglect; they have been able to survive all the vicissitudes of human affairs, and have preserved their suitability to their age and country by successfully resisting every attack, and by flourishing under the most unfavourable conditions.

A form of religion which is to maintain itself, and to be useful to a people, must be especially adapted to their mental constitution, and must respond in an intelligible manner to the better sentiments and the higher capacities of their nature, It would, therefore, appear to us, that those special forms and doctrines which have been slowly elaborated during centuries of struggle and of growth, by the action and reaction of the various national pressures, are those to be preferred. Europe on each other, cannot be exactly adapted to the wants and capacities of every savage race alike. Our form of Christianity, wherever it has maintained itself, has done so by being in harmony with the spirit of the age, and by its adaptability to the mental and moral wants of the people among whom it has taken root. As Macaulay justly observed in the first chapter of his History, "It is a most significant circumstance that no large society of the kind has ever turned Protestant, and that, wherever a language derived from ancient Rome is spoken, the religion of modern Rome to this day prevails." In the early Christian Church, the many untenable doctrines that were woven, and the countless heresies that were but the necessary results of the process of adaptation of the Christian religion to the wants and capacities of many and various peoples, there was an essential feature in the growth of Christianity. This shows that it took root in the hearts and feelings of man, and became a part of their very nature. Thenceforth it grew with its growth, and became the expression of their deepest feelings and of their highest aspirations; and required no alien aid from a subjection of the savage race to keep it from dying out. It was remarked by one of the speakers at the Anthropological Society's meeting that the absence of this modifying and assailing power among modern converts—of this absorption of the new religion into the own national, this colouring given by the national mind—is a bad sign for the ultimate success of our form of Christianity among savages. When once a mission has been established, a fair number of converts made, and the first generation of children educated, the missionary's work should properly have ceased. A native church, with native teachers, should by that time have been established, and should be left to work out its own national form of Christianity.

In many places we have now had missions for more than the period of one generation. Have any self-supporting, free, and national Christian churches arisen among savages? If not—if the new religion can only be kept alive by means of priests sent from a far distant land—priests educated and paid by foreigners, and who are, and ever must be, widely separated from their flock in mind and understanding—is it not the strongest proof of the failure of the missionary scheme? Are these new Christians to be for ever kept in tutelage, and to be for ever taught through particular doctrines which have, perhaps, just become fashionable among us? Are they never to become men, and to form their own opinions, and to develop their own systems, under national and local influences? If, as we hold, Christianity is good for all races and for all nations alike, it is thus alone that its goodness can be tested, and they who fear the results of such a test can have but small confidence in the doctrines they preach.

But we are told to look at the results of missions. We are told that the converted savages are wiser, better, and happier than they were before—that they have improved in morality and in civilization—and that such results can only be shown where missionaries have been at work. No doubt, a great deal of this is true; but certain laymen and philosophers believe that a considerable portion of this effect is due to the example and precept of civilized and educated men—the example of decency, cleanliness, and comfort set by them—their teaching the arts and customs of civilization, and the natural influence of superior race. And it may fairly be asked whether some of these advantages might not be given to savages without the accompanying irritation of particular religious tenets. True, the experiment has not been fairly tried, and the missionaries have almost all the facts to appeal to on their own side; for it is unknowingly the case that the wide sympathy and self-deceiving charity which gives us much more to benefit the savage is almost always accompanied and often strengthened by strong religious convictions; there are not wanting facts to show that something may be done without the influence of religion. It cannot be doubted, for example, that the Roman occupation and the foundation of civilization in Britain, and produced a considerable alleviation in the condition and habits of the people, which was not in any way due to religious teaching.

The Turkic and Egyptian Governments have been, in modern times, much improved, and the condition of their people ameliorated, by the influence of Western civilization, unaccompanied by any change in the national religion. In Java, where the harmony of the Moslem and the Christian converts exists, the government established by the Dutch Government and their pure administration of justice, together with the condition of the people, shows an example widely scattered over the country, and have greatly improved the physical and moral conditions of the people. In these cases, however, the personal influence of kindly, moral, and intelligent men, devoted wholly to the work of civilization, has been wanting; and this form of influence in the case of missionaries is very great. A missionary who is really correct, and has the art (and the heart) to gain the affection of his flock, may do much in clarifying and purifying the life of the people, and raising the standard of morality and happiness. But he may do all this quite independently of any form of sectarian theology in teaching, and it is a truth too often made to impede all to the particular doctrinal intolerance, and little or nothing to the other influences we have mentioned. We believe that the purer mission, the most perfect justice, the highest civilization, and the qualities that tend to render men good, and wise, and happy, may be imputed independently of fixed or humiliating dogmas, and perhaps even better for the want of them. The savage may be certainly made amenable to the influence of the human heart, and will submit the more readily to the teaching of one who does not, at the very outset, attack his rude superstitions.

These will securely die out of themselves, when knowledge and morality and civilization have gained some influence over him; and he will then be in a condition to receive and assimilate whatever is of good and truth in the religion of his teacher. Unfortunately, the practices of European settlers are too often so diametrically opposed to the precepts of Christianity, and so defective in humanity, justice, and charity, that the poor savage cannot fail to be puzzled to understand why this new faith, which is to do him so much good, should have had so little effect on his teacher's own countrymen. The white men in our colonies are too frequently the true savages, and require to be taught and Christianized quite as much as the natives. We have heard, on good authority, that in Australia there has been known to prove the goodness of a rifle he wanted to sell, by shooting a child from the back of a native woman who was paining at some distance, while another, when the policy of shooting all natives who came near a station was discussed, advocated his own plan of putting poisoned food in their way, as being much less troublesome and more effectual. Incredible though such things seem, we can believe that they do not infrequently occur wherever the European comes in contact with the savage man, for human nature changes little with times and places; and we have ourselves heard a Brazilian friar boast, with much complacency, of having supplied the government the expense of a war with a hostile tribe of Indians, by the simple expedient of placing in their way clothing.
infected with the smallpox, which disease soon nearly exterminated them. Fact, perhaps less horrible, but equally indicative of lewdness and inhumanity, may be learned from their colonies; and recent events in Japan and in New Zealand show a determination to pursue our own ends, with very little regard for the rights, or desires for the improvement, of the natives. The savage may well wonder at our inconsistency in pressing upon him a religion which has so signally failed to improve our own; and he too accurately feels in the treatment he receives from Christians. It seems desirable, therefore, that the Roman Catholic Society should endeavour to abolish this want, and their proposed venture some months before the effect of their teaching. It might be well to devote a portion of the funds of such societies to the establishment of model communities, adapted to show the benefits of the civilization we wish to introduce, and to serve as a visible illustration of the effects of Christianity on its professors. The general practice of Christian virtues by the Europeans around them would, we feel assured, be a far more powerful instrument for the general improvement of savage races, and is, perhaps, the only mode of teaching that would produce a real and lasting effect.

W.

CURRENT LITERATURE.

The Temple of Jerusalem.

Writers who of late years have written on the topography of Jerusalem may be divided into two classes—those who maintain that the Temple of Herod, with its courts and porticos, occupied the whole of the present Haram area; and those who, placing their faith in the measurements of Ptolemy, have restricted the sacred enclosure to a space of three hundred feet each way in the south-eastern angle. The advocates of the former position hold that the Holy House itself stood in the inner court, on the north side of the Haram, and {528} placed the towers Antonia and its defences in the southern portion of the Haram; those of the other side, while differing considerably about the exact position of this fortification, agree in refusing to it any connexion with the wall that now overhangs the valley of the Kidron. One of the most strenuous upholders of this latter theory has added to it, by way of corollary, that the cave in the sacred rock of Sakhurah is none other than that in which our Lord's body was laid, and that the Kubbet es-Sakhurah (commonly called the West the Mosque of Omar) is the church which, according to its translation of 854, was erected over the cave by order of Constantine the Great. The magnificent work of Count d'Ohsson of Egypt, now lying before us, the first fruits of the labours of himself and his companions in Syria, has the most important bearing upon this controversy, as it does from chaos to chaos. Truth and learning are indisputable, and what he has written is above suspicion, is a most welcome addition to the best of the learned and ancient archeology.

Count d'Ohsson first visited the Holy Land, in 1854, the result of which was the well-known "Les Eglises de la Terre Sainte," Count d’Ohsson himself having been allowed to enter the Haram, and was obliged to content himself with examining its exterior, and with such views of its interior as he could be gained from commanding positions. On his next visit to Jerusalem, in 1862, he found the barrier of colours which d'Ohsson's beautiful view presented at the moment of meeting and admiration, now in the same sense as in all other parts of the building, probably about the age of Constantine; the capital of one of the latter still retains a small cross on the abacus, and at first sight seems to be a strong argument in favor of the Constantinian hypothesis. The hopes thus raised are, however, blighted by Count d'Ohsson, in the following words:

"Between which (the corner-piers) are columns supporting round-headed arches; their shafts, monoliths of valuable marble, are much worn and height and breadth. They are the spoils of some more ancient monuments, and so are the capitals. This is a curious series of very various types. (P. 83.)"

Again he says, with regard to the general character of the building:

But though Symmotic in style, it is in no respect a Christian edifice—the absence of the type of the apse and of the semi-elliptical or square apses which characterize the Christian basilicas. There are a few Roman arches, and the heads of columns are sometimes broken off the church which have been its model. The age is, then, the characteristic feature of the early churches, and its absence in this case proves that the architect of the Kubbet es-Sakhurah was a Greek, or at least a Syrian, and not a Christian, who built here in accordance with the Syriac style, knowing how to impart to it a Mohammedan character. (P. 83.)"

The remains of the building belong to two periods: those filling the intervals between the interrupted round arches (separating the aisles) are the most ancient; above them is a barrel vault, bearing an inscription in letters of gold, running completely round the building, in one line, which reads, "Constantine made this house in the year 72." (P. 83.)

With regard to this, the author observes:

The name which we have placed between brackets is that which is not the monument; but it is very obvious that it is an alteration, and it is interesting to observe that, in either case, it bears of a different thing, the letters are smaller, and squeezed together; the Caliph Al-Mansur, who reconquered Jerusalem, in his inscription, in the year 833, has substituted his name for that of Abd-el-Malik, with a view of appropriating the glory of his predecessor.

A remarkably perfect inscription in another part of the building, commemorating certain repairs made in this prince, strongly corroborates this supposition.

The second series of inscriptions consists of two stages in the drama of the dome, the upper of which is placed with windows. At an early date (A.D. 1070), and work subsequently erected during the restorations rendered necessary by the fall of the dome, which was the effect of an earthquake in the year 407. The interior of the dome is ornamented with paintings, and in an excellent state, which indicates that the gilding was renewed by Saladin. Count d'Ohsson, however, is in doubt as to whether the windows are the remains of original mosaics; or if, as is more probable, that the whole decoration is the work of the reign of the Crusaders.

Other inscriptions commemorate restorations at a later date.

The beautiful stained-glass windows, three of which are reproduced in colours, were inserted by the Caliph, in the year 870 A.D. We commend them to the students of that art, especially to those who are seeking for designs to fill the windows of the new St. John's Cathedral, and other buildings of the Renaissance.