

PROTESTANT
MISSIONS IN BENGAL

ILLUSTRATED :

BEING

THE SUBSTANCE OF A COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED ON

INDIAN MISSIONS.

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manual labour in the field, and at the forge, is to the European, in a tropical climate, an impossibility; and after a short attempt, the artizans became ill, and were obliged to lay the hammer and the hoe aside. Moreover, every kind of handy-work is done at a much cheaper rate by the Hindoo, who lives upon rice and vegetables; so that no European can compete with him in price on this account.

In stations which have been occupied by missionaries for some years, there are larger or smaller congregations of native Christians found. In the south of Calcutta, verging on the swampy jungles of the Sunderbunds, through which the Ganges slowly winds its way in many branches towards the sea, the missionaries of three or four societies have been successful in many villages, baptizing and bringing thousands of Hindoos belonging to the peasantry under religious instruction. Brahmins are scarce in those parts, and if missionaries were able to settle in the villages, many more would embrace Christianity;—but the country is unhealthy and the water brackish, causing diarrhœa and fever.* During seven months of the year we

* The life of an excellent missionary, Mr. De Rodt, was sacrificed in August, 1843, in consequence of an excursion in these unhealthy districts during that month.

can only proceed in boats from one place to another; and good roads are nowhere to be seen. When on a mission tour in that neighbourhood I was conveyed along in the hollow trunk of a tree; and where the water was too shallow to bear even this simple canoe, the boatmen pushed the craft forward on the soft mud. This country is also infested by wild beasts, for in these dense jungles the tiger, the rhinoceros, the alligator, the boa constrictor, and other unwelcome neighbours, abound.

It has been calculated that the number of converts in Bengal, and the north-western provinces, in connexion with the various Protestant missions, amounts to about fifteen thousand; a small band, indeed, when we compare them with the masses of heathen among whom they are dispersed; for the presidencies of Bengal and Agra alone, contain some eighty millions of inhabitants; "But the kingdom of God is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, and the birds of the air lodge in the branches thereof."

I have not been in the south of India, where the apostolic Schwartz with his worthy coadjutors, and in our own days Rhenius, have so zealously and