

THE "CONTRADICTIONS OF THE BIBLE"

AND

THE RAWAL PINDI MISSION SCHOOL.

Having given room in our September number (see p. 304) to a letter from a Hindu correspondent, belonging to a Mission School, who accused his Superintendent, the Revd. N—— of abuse of power, we sent a copy of that number to the party charged of the offence, in order to give him a chance of replying to the accusation. We have now his reply and we print it *verbatim*. At the same time, we have also received another letter from the plaintiff, which we publish alongside with that of the Revd. gentleman. We regret our inability to comply with the request of the latter. "In case Lakshman sends you any more cock-and-bull stories, please favour me with a sight of them before putting them into print, as they may be improved by an explanation from me?"—writes to us the Revd. C. B. Newton. We answer: We have no right to betray the confidence of a correspondent, even though he may be proved to have exaggerated the offence. We are glad for the Revd. gentleman's sake that it should be so, and sorry for the young man that he should have found it necessary to exaggerate.* With all that, we cannot remain satisfied with the explanations given by the Revd. Mr. Newton. The main point is not whether he has confiscated the book—another person's property—brutally or politely; but, rather, whether he had any right to do so at all, since Lakshman Singh was not a Christian; and the Mission Schools, especially the American, have no right to break the promises of religious neutrality given to the Hindus and Mussalmans by the Government that gives them shelter and hospitality. And, if Lakshman Singh proves that he has been expelled from the school for no greater crime than appealing to public opinion to decide upon the legality of such forced proselytism, and for refusing to sign an untruthful statement to save his prospects of education from ruin, then, we doubt whether the Revd. Mr. Newton will thereby strengthen much either his own case or that of the religion he would enforce upon his pupils by means that no one would venture to call altogether fair. And since our Revd. correspondent does us the honour of acknowledging that we maintain certain principles, such as truthfulness and fair-play, in common with himself, we would fain ask him in the name of that truthfulness, whether he would have ever cared to confiscate, as promptly as he has the "Self-contradictions of the Bible," some of the missionary works that tear down, abuse, and revile the gods of the Hindus, and the other so-called "heathen" religions? And if not, is it not forcing the poor youths of India, who have no other means of being educated, to pay rather too dearly for that education, if they have to obtain it at the price of their ancestral faith, or be turned out for seeking to learn the truth about a religion which they are asked to prefer to their own and which yet is represented to them but from one of its aspects, namely, the missionary side? We call it neither fair nor generous; nor yet charitable. True charity neither asks nor does it expect its reward; and, viewed from this stand-point, the free mission schools must appear to every unprejudiced person no better than ill-disguised traps for the unsophisticated "heathens," and the missionaries themselves as guilty all round of false pretences. Far more respectable appear to us even the ludicrous Salvationists who, if they masquerade in Oriental costumes, do not at least disguise their real aims and objects, and have, at any rate, the merit of sincerity, however brutally expressed. Therefore we maintain what we have said before: the act of which the Revd. Newton and the two school-masters stand accused of, is—ABUSE OF POWER.

I.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "THEOSOPHIST."

I received a copy of the magazine abovenamed (for September) day before yesterday, and presume you sent it. I thank you cordially for doing so, as it gives me the opportunity of replying to an article which concerns myself and the teachers of the Mission School in this place.

You and I do not agree in our religious belief, but there are certain principles we maintain in common, such as truthfulness and fair play.

I trust therefore you will have the goodness to give the same publicity to the reply that you have to the charges it is designed to refute.

* Well, if he has, better let him go and defend himself.

The enclosed statement will show you that you have been imposed upon, and have been made the means of, unwittingly propagating a fiction founded on a *very* thin substratum of fact—a story which is in almost every particular, as false as it is injurious.

In your editorial denunciation of my supposed conduct, you have my full sympathy. The terms "brutal abuse of power" and "robbery" are a little strong, but perhaps not too strong for the iniquitous proceedings described, *if they had occurred*: but they did not occur.

The case as regards the lad Lakshman is aggravated by the fact that he has for some months past been in receipt of a scholarship from the school to enable him to pursue his studies. A part of this allowance he seems to have been spending in the purchase of books designed to controvert the principles on which the school is established.

I am Yours faithfully,

C. B. NEWTON,

Superintendent, Mission School.

American Mission, Rawal Pindi, Sept. 13, 1882.

STATEMENT.

RAWAL PINDI MISSION SCHOOL, Sept. 13, 1882.

This morning I assembled the whole school, and in the presence of all, called upon Lakshman Singh, a pupil of the 5th class, High School, to pay strict attention, and either contradict or corroborate what I should narrate in reference to the book "Contradictions of the Bible."

The facts I then proceeded to narrate are as follows:—

Lakshman Singh having ordered the book in question, and expecting himself to be absent at the time of its arrival, requested the Second Master to take it from the post man, and send it to him by one of his class mates.

The Second Master received the book as directed, and, when he found out its character,* consulted the Head Master by whose advice he brought it to me.

The next morning I called Lakshman Singh aside, and told him I had his book. I said I was sorry he was so anxious to see the Bible falsified, and would rather not have him read a book which, from his comparative ignorance of the Bible, might mislead him, but that since he had bought the book, and it was his property, I did not feel that I had any right to withhold it from him; and therefore, *I would give it to him*, but, before doing so, would like to read it with him, so that with the poison, I might supply an antidote. He assented without hesitation or demur, and at my invitation came to my house, where we read a few pages as agreed. It was my intention to take several days to it, and go through the whole, but he freely expressed himself as satisfied that the apparent contradictions were not real ones, and said further that it was "wáhiyát," "nonsense;" that he would not have sent for the book if he had known its character, and that he did not care now to have it at all. All this came from him with an air of perfect sincerity and without any prompting on my part. I replied that I would be glad to keep it since he was willing, and would pay him whatever expense he had incurred. This, however, he said was not necessary, as it was a small sum.

The foregoing narrative was fully corroborated by Lakshman Singh, item by item, in the presence of the teachers and pupils of the school.

I then read aloud and translated into Hindustani, the letter in the THEOSOPHIST, together with the comments of the Editor, and, having done so, asked Lakshman Singh who had written the letter. He said he did not know. I then sent for writing materials and told him to write that statement down, and attach his signature. He held back. I said, "I do not wish you to write it if it is not true; if it is true, why do you hesitate?" He stepped forward, took up the pen, hesitated, laid it down again and confessed that he had written the letter.

I finally asked him why he had represented himself as a teacher in the school. He replied that he had never done so in any of the letters he had written to Bombay, and that it must have been a mistaken inference.

C. B. NEWTON,

Superintendent.

* How did the Second Master come to know of the contents of the packet? Was he authorised to open it? Or is he possessed of any *clairvoyant* faculties?—Ed. *pro tem*.