PREEMINENCE OF THE VERNACULARS: OR THE ANGLICISTS ANSWERED : BEING FOUR ...

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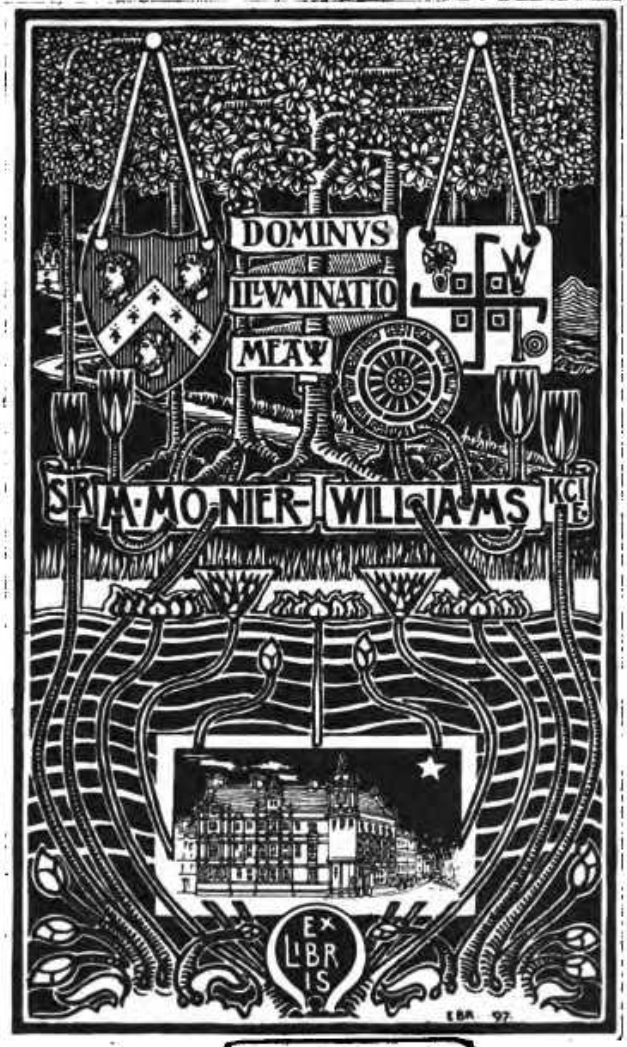
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PREEMINENCE

OF THE

VERNACULARS;

OR

THE ANGLICISTS ANSWERED:

BEING

FOUR LETTERS ON THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE OF INDIA.

By B. H. HODGSON, Esq. B. C. S.

FOURTH EDITION.

FROM THE SERAMPORE PRESS.

1847.

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PREFACE.

THREE of the four following letters were first published several years back, and lest it should be supposed that the course of time has antiquated their reasonings, I beg leave to suggest that arguments so general are not so rapidly affected by time, and that in point of fact the Macaulayism* of one cycle is but the Trevelyanism* of another, and that the recent practical measures of Lord Hardinge are but the effectuation of the doctrines contended against in these letters. I admit the sagacity and decision with which Lord Hardinge has carried out the most accredited educational maxims of his predecessors: I admit the possibility of these measures of our revered Governor General supplying the public service with a superior class of native functionaries, though I confess the apprehension that this new class of functionaries may prove competent in *our* special acquirements only by losing all competency in *their own!* But I contend that any thing worthy the name of National Education, as being addressed to remedy the intellectual and moral wants of the mass of the people, is not comprised in these measures which address themselves only or chiefly to the wants of the public service; and I would add with submission that the principles and reasonings upon which rest that avowed preference for English which dates its present ascendancy from the days of Lord Bentinck and Mr. Macaulay,

* These words are used with all honour and respect as the readiest means of speaking of well known acta et scripta of well known men, of whom the genius of the one and the benevolence of the other command my unfeigned homage. Mr. Macaulay's Minute is but a second edition of Mr. Trevelyan's Treatise.

are very far inferior in philosophic comprehensiveness as well as in benevolence and expediency, to the principles and reasonings whence were deduced, according to the wants of that age, the Educational maxims of a Hastings (Warren) and a Wellesley. I confess an unlimited preference for the latter, not only because it is infinitely more practicable to make Europeans familiar with the words and things of India, than to make Indians familiar with the words and things of Europe, but also because the former course tends perpetually to rebuke and subdue; the latter course to excuse and foster, those peccant idiosyncrasies of the haughty island race to whom God has committed this land, which half neutralise the blessings derived from the no less characteristic integrity and energy of that race. The vivifying spirit of our sound knowledge, which it is so desirable to diffuse throughout India, is no way inseparably connected with its lingual vehicle; and whilst every step we make in the grand project of indigenating that knowledge in India by means of vernacularization will prove a bond of blessed union between ourselves and the mass of our subjects, and a safe, a sure, and an universally operative agent of the desiderated change in them: the contrary project of anglicization will help to widen the existing lamentable gulf that divides us from the mass of the people, and put into the hands of the few among themselves an exclusive and dangerous power, quite similar in essential character to that power which for ages past the scribes and priests of the East have wielded, to the deplorable detriment of the spiritual and temporal welfare of their fellows, and therefore possibly destined only to perpetuate in a new phase the ancient curse of this land, or exclusive learning! Sanscrit, Arabic, Persian, have proved the curse of this land, not so much by reason of the false doctrines they have inculcated as by reason of the administrative mystery they have created and upheld; and I hold it to surpass the wit of man to demonstrate that that terrible mystery will not be perpetuated by English; for, long ages must elapse before public institutions and public opinion become omnipotent in the interior of this land, and in the meanwhile