THE MARTYR OF THE PONGAS : BEING A MEMOIR OF THE REV. HAMBLE JAMES LEACOCK, LEADER OF THE WEST INDIAN MISSION TO WESTERN AFRICA

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A Memoir

OF THE

REV. HAMBLE JAMES LEACOCK,

LEADER OF THE WEST INDIAN MISSION
TO WESTERN AFRICA.

BY THE

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PREFACE.

Few Missionary heroes have been more remarkable than the man of God whom the West Indian Church is now lamenting. Seldom has more encouraging success attended so brief a career; seldom has a nobler example of self-devotion adorned the records of the extension of Christianity.

The history of such a man, if faithfully told, is well adapted to show the elements which form the able missionary, and to exhibit the modes of action by which, with Divine help, the Gospel may, in our own age, be effectually propagated.

The Author is fully aware of the difficulty of giving due effect to such a history. Yet he has done all that a long and hearty friendship could dictate, to perpetuate the blessed memory of one whom he loved and revered. With the hope of representing him as he really was, he has allowed him to speak for himself whenever opportunity permitted. He has at-

tempted to show the varied connexions and associations of his life, and the origin, as far as it can be traced, of his principles and habits. It is not pretended that Hamble Leacock was in all respects perfect. It is not denied, for example, that he may have been sometimes restless and self-willed, sometimes hasty and over-sensitive, and sometimes mistaken. Yet his failings were generally the result of those very qualities which constituted the peculiar eminence of his character. His stern and unflinching mind (so tender and holy withal) was doubtless given him that he might *dare* in a wonderful way amidst the prejudices of the West Indies, the doctrinal laxity of America, and the heathenism of Africa.

The reader will not see in Mr. Leacock an unamiable abstraction destitute of human feelings and sympathies, but a *man* thoroughly real and unaffected. He will see in him a religion which, though supremely devoted to God, still cherished the impulses of affectionate attachment to friends, relatives, and country; a religion which though profoundly adoring the mysteries of Redemption, was by no means blind to the glories of Providence and Creation. There will be found in it no undue estimate of spiritual condition, no idea of exclusive sanctity or wisdom, no fondness for loud professions, no habit of displaying frames

and feelings. On the other hand, there will be seen a superiority to the world, practically manifesting itself in the surrender of property and prospects, in the readiness to take a secondary place, and in the cheerful willingness to endure any sacrifice required by justice, truth, and duty.

In the ministry of Christ's Church, it is well that there should be decided varieties of type, and that all should not be formed precisely according to the same model. It is not desirable, for instance, that a clergy designed for service in various nations and climates should be always trained by English Universities and amid the conventionalisms of English society. It will be seen, that the man of God whose life is recorded in the following pages, grew up remote from our fashions of thought, and from the traditionary influences of our Colleges and Cathedrals. Yet it cannot be denied that he was not only a worthy representative of our Reformed Church, but a true specimen of the class of men produced in our distant fields of Christian enterprise. Though his early theological training was, in some respects, defective, he was yet sound in the faith, and inflexible in his adherence to the great bulwarks of orthodoxy. Though firmly attached to the distinctive principles of Episcopacy, he lived in charity with those whose lot had fallen among

separatist communities. Believing in the divine origin of the Christian ministry, and upholding a high standard of clerical responsibility, he yet had none of that asceticism which prescribes terms of salvation more severe than are to be found in the Word of God. Faithful in his friendships, firm in his convictions, and sincere in his conversation, he possessed an honest dignity which neither honours nor preferment could have bestowed, and which he maintained throughout all the changes of his eventful life.

Those who have done great things in the world have usually been peculiar persons, different from other men. They have shown uncommon fire, energy, and decision, and, at the same time, have tempered these qualities with knowledge and wisdom. Men of this stamp are not only able to accomplish much, but, amidst the difficulties which surround them, they are susceptible of the choicest encouragements and consolations. Now a mission, properly understood, is no common thing. Persons of an ordinary cast of mind are unfit for such a work. The true missionary cannot be expected to think and feel like those who walk in the beaten track, and, consequently, he will often be reproached as an eccentric person or an enthusiast. Yet his enthusiasm, if such it be, is of the same kind which glowed in the bosoms of the Prophets and

Apostles. It must be carefully distinguished from that enthusiasm which puffs men up with vain conceit, and makes them arrogant, dictatorial, and assuming. Keenly alive to his own personal imperfections, the man who is blessed with this holy fervour looks beyond himself for support, and believing in the power of prayer, habitually and confidently, in all his undertakings, expects strength and succour from above.

In this sense alone Mr. Leacock possessed enthusiasm. But in addition to this, he had qualifications not always combined with a fervid temperament. His habits were regular, economical, active, diligent, and persevering. He was brave and intrepid without being insensible to the real value of life. His piety was of a vigorous and manly character, and at the same time entirely free from that melancholy which has hindered the usefulness of many faithful missionaries. While maintaining habitual communion with his Saviour, he exhibited a genial disposition, which in every place gained him hearty friends. His practical earnestness led him, not to teach people to say certain things or use a certain formula, but to aim at turning them in reality "from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

From early life he had shown the spirit of a mar-