MAY, 1908.

Preparation for Service.

Isaiah vi. 1-8.

An address to Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Kandy, January 4th, 1908.

Assembled as we are now—a number of workers in God's vineyard, honoured by King, placed in the fore­front—and specially gathered together for prayer and conference at the outset of a new year—must not one question arise from all our hearts, and that, "Lord! what hast Thou to say to me"?

If only He will vouchsafe to answer this question through me this morning and on succeeding days, to Him shall be all the glory!

This familiar passage of Scripture Is. vi. 1-8 supplies one answer: It tells us that
1. For God's Service there must be a preparation and
2. What that preparation must be.

It would appear that what is recorded here was not Isaiah's first call to the prophetic office, but his inauguration to a higher degree in it, and one that involved considerable difficulty and therefore much courage.

The vision vouchsafed to Him is laid at the temple in Jerusalem. He appears to be standing outside, but, through the open doors and withdrawn veil, to see that which he describes. The occasion was a very important one: King Uzziah—whose reign had extended over 52 years—had just died, and the throne of Judah was empty. Nor was that all. The moral and spiritual condition of the people was such that the kingdom of Judah was fast hastening to the same disastrous end as Israel, and the heart of the prophet might well be despondent.

That the vision given him should be one of an occupied throne, would exactly suit his state of mind, as he was sadly thinking of an empty one. He is made to realise that there is a throne which is never empty; and that the Lord who occupies it exercises His order and government even when the earth is in a state of chaos.

He says "I saw the Lord sitting" &c.

The statement is very definite, there is nothing uncertain about it. He does not attempt to describe the Person Himself—which is very significant. He passes at once to a description of the surrounding facts.

I. His train—after that of an Eastern Monarch, then the Seraphim (i.e. the burning ones of dazzling brightness), their Song: the thunder of their voice which caused a shaking that moved the very foundations of the thresholds: and the smoke which filled the house.

The essential idea is that of a Person enthroned and one of supreme majesty. That is the leading thought which takes possession of his mind.

As to the Seraphim, he speaks of their six wings and how they use them—two to cover their face, two to cover their feet, and two to fly with.

The veil of the face seems to signify that they acknowledged themselves unworthy (as well as unable) to look on the holy God, or to apprehend the mystery of His Being. The veiling of the feet, will be a token of reverence and submission. It is the hiding of any personal standing in the presence of supreme Authority.

The two remaining wings are not active for the Seraphim only wait to do God's bidding.

Next, we are called upon to listen to the Song. It is twofold:—
1. As to the nature of the enthroned One.—"Holy Holy Holy."
2. It is a song the subject of which is earth.

A song about earth in that High Presence Chamber in which Jehovah sits enthroned.

Is not this something for us men to rejoice in? And what do the Seraphs sing?

"The whole earth is full of His glory" or as R. V. (margin) 'The fulness of the whole earth is His glory.' These Spirits that surround the throne look down upon the earth and see God's glory in it.

Is not this most inspiring, for surely it tells of ultimate victory when the song shall burst forth "The kingdoms of this world &c." Rev. xi. 15.

Notice for a moment, the effect of this song. "The very foundations of the thresholds were moved &c. trembl­led—and the house was filled with smoke which we must take to be "the Shekinah cloud"—another manifestation of the glory of the Lord. 1 Kings viii. 10, 11; esp. 11.

"The priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord. See Ezek. x. 4. "The house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory."

II. Such was the sublime vision granted to Isaiah. And it calls forth from him immediately the "exceeding great and bitter cry " woe is me"! &c.

The answer was not a prepared one, but it surged up from the depths of his soul, only as words do under the stress of very deep emotion. He speaks thus because nothing else comes to his mind. He is—in agony of soul. He sees himself as probably he had never done before—and not only himself but his fellowmen, for he sees both now in the clear light of God's holiness.

Why does he say "unclean lips"? Because "the lips"—the mouth—are the expressions of the man—they are the reflection (or counterpart) of his heart. See our Lord's words(Matt. xv. 18). "The things that proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man." Within is the fountain-head of corruption, but it is poured out and expressed through the tongue and lips, and so Isaiah says "I am undone, because." &c.

The words are "unclean" because the source of them is so.

What has this to do with his work? Everthing? Do not we realise it for ourselves?

Our's, like Isaiah's is work for God. As we realise that, and what we are in ourselves, must it not appear one of the greatest marvels of His grace and mercy that He uses us at all! If we would estimate this fact duly, we must have stood as Isaiah did, in the presence of His holiness and glory: then we shall have found out how utterly unworthy we are to utter His message.

But God be praised! we are not to stop here; a "then" follows, and that is the dividing line.

We have tried to look at the glory of God—at the enthroned Jehovah—and at this man smitten in his inmost soul by a sense of unworthiness.
Then what?—flew one of the Seraphim &c. having a burning coal in his hand which he had taken with the tongs from the altar—the place of sacrifice. This he lays upon the prophet's lips, and as he does so, he says "Lo! this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged."—(lit. covered, i.e. expiated)—not by any physical effect of fire to cleanse from sin, but in relation to the altar-sacrifices—types of the one great sacrifice to be wrought by Messiah upon Calvary. How clearly is it implied in this vision that it is only by sacrifice (and that the sacrifice of Christ) that sin can be pardoned. Heb. ix. 22, with x. 4 and 10.

Oh! precious words! What do we learn from them? (1) That for the man or woman, called to God's service there is perfect cleansing and energizing provided, therefore for ourselves. Not only that, but (2)—that out of the midst of the overwhelming and awful glory of God there comes forth also the most marvellous manifestation of His grace. Enthroned with majesty, surrounded by Seraphim—exulted in their Song—He can yet hear the cry of a sinful man bemoaning his unworthiness—and as He hears it—a Seraph must, at His command, leave the place of worship to carry to that poor, humbled, human soul, the assurance of pardon, making him realise that the disability under which he consciously laboured has been removed, and that even the most High God is pleased to use him in His service.

Possibly, at this stage of the vision there may have been a pause—a solemn silence. And then the prophet hears the voice of the Lord, Jehovah, Himself. He asks "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" To this question there comes an immediate response—and it is "Here am I, send me!"

There is no staying to enquire what the requirement will be—what the work to be done—what the message to be delivered. The vision of God's glory, and the assured sense of sin forgiven and removed, are too fresh in the mind to admit of any hesitation, the thought of the honour of being allowed to represent Jehovah is so all-engrossing that it is impossible to stay to calculate what may be involved in this call to higher service, and so the ready answer is "Here am I, send me!"

Let each one of us ask this morning "Is this the expression of my heart? and has it been evoked because I, too have had a vision of God. I have seen something of His holiness and glory; the sight has humbled me in the dust, it has brought to light my sinfulness as I never before understood it. I have been compelled to call upon God under a deep sense of self-abasement and having proved amiss that "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Ps. 34.18.), I can hold nothing back that He requires of me, but can only say "My spirit, soul and body Jesus I give to Thee. A consecrated off'ring Thine evermore to be."

"Oh! to be nothing, nothing! only to be at His feet, A broken emptied vessel, for the Master's use made meet."

Notes of the two other addresses given by Mr. Rowlands will be published in the Gleaner in June and July.

Boys' English School, Cotta.

Mr. C. A. Botejue, who has since the retirement last Christmas of Mr. William de Silva, been Headmaster of the above school, has decided to follow the legal profession, and has therefore resigned his post. We are indebted to him for very useful work in steering through a transition stage. It is gratifying to him and to all concerned that the examination results, viewed financially, have only once been surpassed in the last ten years. There is scope for improvement and advance in the upper standards, but there is decided promise that next year will, with God's blessing, show better results. To fill the vacancy Mr. Reginald C. Perera who came to us recently has been advanced from the post of first Assistant. This post is to be filled by Mr. H. D. Aponso. Both of these Masters have been awarded Second Class Certificates on the strength of having passed the final examination in the Government Training College.

Cotta District.

Boralesgamuwa Church Reopened.

On Feb. 24th St. Matthias' day, the Church at Boralesgamuwa (Mampe Pastorate) was dedicated, the foundation stone having been laid by Mrs. Dowbiggin on April 2, 1907. The building consists of a chancel in which are three lancet windows from the old Galle Face Church, and a nave, of which the walls rise to about six feet, leaving an open space below the wall-plates. The floor has been cemented, one or two benches have been presented, and the communion table and rails are the gift of the Rev. Canon Gedge. The total cost has been nearly Rs 900/- but of this all but about Rs 40/- was in hand, before the dedication-day. Though there had been a long spell of dry weather, the afternoon was very rainy, but the church was well filled with about 100 adults and children.

The Rev. J. H. Wickramanayaka, Pastor of Mampe, Rev. G. S. Amarasekara (Nugegoda) and the Rev. R. W. Ryde officiated. Our good friend the Rev. J. D. Dathan, naval Chaplain, also managed to be present on the eve of his departure to England, as his ship was in Colombo Harbour. The 24th Psalm and the special lessons were read by the Mampe Pastor. The Rev. G. S. Amarasekara preached from 1 Cor. 3.16, a suitable and helpful sermon, at the conclusion of which he urged those present to value their church and to endeavour to bring others to it. The Rev. R. W. Ryde offered the dedication prayers. It may be mentioned that the building work was not given out on contract, but the whole was carried on under the careful supervision of Mr. D. J. Ratnayaka, the school master, who has much cause for thankfulness at the result of his labours.

At a meeting of the Cotta District Council held on March 7th, it has unanimously decided to separate the Mampe Pastorate from the Cotta District Council and from it into a Privileged Church Committee. Subsequently at a meeting held at Mampe, the officers and new Committee members were elected and the burden of self-support has been gladly and enthusiastically received. The new Privileged Church Committee's sphere of operations includes Mampe, Madapata and Boralesgamuwa (where there are churches) and the Pannipitiya, Homagama and Palannoruwa centres. The Rev. J. H. Wickramanayaka is the pastor in charge. It is confidently expected that this arrangement will be doubly advantageous. The Cotta District Council's responsibilities will be lighter, while the greater responsibility now resting on Mampe will call forth greater effort and therefore produce greater success.
May what has been done be to the glory of God and the extension of the Kingdom of our Saviour.

A Tour through the Mission Fields of Ceylon.

You have desired us if possible, to give you a sketch of our tour through the Mission Fields of Ceylon, and with great pleasure we send you a short account.

We may commence by saying we have travelled 1,500 miles or from Jaffna to Dondra Head and Colombo to Batticaloa, and have had to use almost every kind of conveyance under the Eastern sky. Needless to say we have had to put up with some discomforts, for travelling in the East is not as easy as it might be; but if one wishes to see Mission work outside the great centres one must expect that. We have been received and welcomed most heartily in every station we have visited and have been given every opportunity of service. In some we have stayed over a week and from these we have visited the out-stations and villages.

We have missed many of the older missionaries, for however good a missionary may be he cannot be expected to do such good work as one who has had 40 or 50 years experience.

We consider the branch of Mission work which does the most good is that of the Boarding Schools and would specially mention those at Jaffna, Cotta, Richmond Hill, Batticaloa and Badulla. This work should be extended wherever possible and the very best workers employed, whose whole time should be devoted to it—and we think that the mere fact that Buddhists and Hindoos alike agree in praising these schools where the moral and physical training is so good is sufficient encouragement to further effort in this direction; and we believe and trust that the boys and girls so reared will become not only good Christians but a credit to the British nation.

Next we may mention the Day Schools, of which we have visited a great many and had the pleasure of addressing, and we would say that in no country we have visited have we noticed such excellent attention and behaviour of the scholars as in these schools of Ceylon—we have not had occasion once to call them to attention during our addresses.

Then as regards the Industrial Schools, every facility has been given the students to acquire an industry which shall be useful to them in after life, and the centres at Galle, Badulla and Kalmunai are well worth a visit and deserve great praise.

What has impressed us most has been the great need for more teachers who should be thorough and proficient for the various schools, and it seems to us there is a large opening for Training Colleges for teachers which has not yet been filled. We were glad to be able to visit the training class for teachers at Cotta and were only sorry that its numbers could not have been doubled, and many more such institutions at the various centres of Mission work in Ceylon.

Considering the higher prices of provisions now in the island, it is absolutely necessary that the teachers should receive a higher salary, otherwise they are apt to drift into Government or other employ where they can earn enough to keep them out of debt. But of course all these improvements require extra funds and it is very disheartening to find how few subscriptions there are, comparatively speaking, from the Ceylon public.

When one considers the large salaries drawn by Government servants and others, the profits derived from the tea and other industries, one feels that a very great responsibility rests upon such and it will be a glad day when they realize this and the joy of giving.

We as English people religiously keep Empire Day; we speak to and teach others about their responsibility as British subjects—on our duty to one another, on sympathy and self-sacrifice; but are we willing to observe our own share in this direction? Surely we, the Europeans should be the first to set such an example.

Before closing we would like to say how much we have been interested in the medical work of the Jaffna Peninsula, Batticaloa and Welimada. One cannot over estimate the good our medical friends are doing and we feel that this branch of Mission work is one of the greatest powers for good possible and will become one of the greatest means for bringing people to the knowledge of the love of God.

W. G. J.

A Layman's impressions.

In these days when so much adverse criticism of mission work is heard, both from the so called men in the street at home and also from Englishmen resident abroad, a few notes of the impressions of an ordinary travelling Englishman and his wife on this subject may be of interest, especially as they have had exceptional opportunities of seeing for themselves the work which is being carried on at an important mission centre in Ceylon.

Through the kind hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Ryde we were enabled to spend a fortnight at the C. M. S. mission station at Cotta. We arrived there the last day of April having made the journey from Colombo Terminus station in a bullock cart. As we drove along in this, to us, novel means of locomotion, enlivened by the strange cries of the driver urging on his animal, we gradually left the town and breathed the fresher air of the country. The road all the way was thickly studded with native shops and houses showing all the signs of a teeming population, and the thought crossed one's mind what impression are the Christian workers making on these people, are their lives and characters being affected to any appreciable extent by the proclamation of the Christian Faith in their midst?

The day after our arrival being Quinquagesima Sunday, at 9 a.m. we attended a celebration of the Holy Communion in the church of the Mission compound. The service was conducted in Sinhalese by the Rev. R. W. Ryde who preached the sermon also in Sinhalese. The congregation which filled the greater part of the roomy church was attentive and reverent; it consisted of six Europeans, the scholars from the various schools in the Mission compound with the masters, and mistresses, and a few natives from outside. It was indeed a novel and interesting experience for us though unable to understand a word of the service or sermon I was deeply impressed by the solemnity of the occasion. Here we were white and coloured, European and native witnessing by our reception of the Blessed Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood that we are members of one Body and as members of that Body we are mutually responsible to each other for the welfare of our souls and bodies.
In the afternoon there was a service at 4-30 in English, the congregation was smaller but equally devout and reverent. Mr. Ryde, who in the interval, had been off taking a service at a church two or three miles away, again conducted the service and preached, this time in English. In the evening between eight and nine, the boys from the boarding school came over with their masters to Mr. Ryde’s house. Then in the drawing room, squatting on the floor they sang hymns in English and Sinhalese. Of their musical capabilities I cannot say much but that they thoroughly enjoyed that hour there can be no question. On the morning of Shrove Tuesday we went to visit the girls’ schools. We first visited the training school for women teachers. Here Miss Gedge has under her some twenty young women all baptised Christians who look forward to going out to uphold the cross of Christ in the various church schools in Ceylon. They appeared to be a bright and intelligent set of young women. We saw their kitchen, dormitory, dining room etc. everything seemed comfortable and orderly. No doubt the young woman who qualifies for the position of school teacher in England would look upon such fare and lodging as strange, but the Sinhalese are simple in their requirements. We then went to see the girls’ day school. Here there are 62 girls on the list, there are both Buddhists and Christians, but the influence is of course entirely Christian. The education here is carried on in Sinhalese. We paid a visit to Mrs. Dowbiggin’s anglo-vernacular boarding school for girls. Here Mrs. Dowbiggin assisted by Miss Hutchinson is doing good work; there is no religious test, but the object of the school is the spread of Christianity and most of the girls are daughters of Christian parents.

The outcome of one’s visit to these educational establishments is the thought, what a power for good these girls are going to be. Most of them will go out as convinced Christians anxious to win their relations and friends for Christ.

Even those who do not become Christians will go back to their own people having acquired a Christian standard of life and morals, a different outlook in life, more fitted to be the future mother’s of their race, and to raise up worthy citizens of the great Empire to which we are all proud to belong, the endurance of which must eventually depend on the character of its citizens down to the humblest member. On Ash Wednesday we attended a service in the mission church in the compound; it was conducted in Sinhalese and the sermon was preached by a lay reader, one of the assistant Catechist’s, who is I understand looking forward to taking Holy Orders. As to the merits of the sermon I am unable to give an opinion because I could not understand a word.

In the afternoon of Ash Wednesday we drove over to see one of the district churches about three miles away at a place called ‘Upper Welikada.’ Here we found a service going on, conducted in Sinhalese by a native Pastor, with a congregation of perhaps twenty-five to thirty people. I wonder in how many village churches in England you would find any congregation gathered together in the afternoon or evening of this the first day of Lent! On the following day we drove to see a district Church about four miles away at a place called Boralesgumwua. Here there is a small Church and a school the work being carried on under a native Pastor.

On the afternoon of the first Sunday in Lent I went with Mr. Ryde to the church at Mirihane about two miles from Kotte; as Mr. Ryde had arranged to help there at this service. There was a fair congregation, the service in English was read by a young Sinhalese lay reader, the sermon being preached by Mr. Ryde.

In this Kotte district I find there are eight Churches and thirty-four schools. At the end of the year 1907 there were 732 adult members of the churches in the district and the native subscriptions for the year amounted to over 2,000 rupees.

Five European missionaries live at the central mission at Kotte, i.e. Mr. and Mrs. Ryde and the three ladies mentioned before. Three native ordained Pastors, five Catechists, five readers and two Bible-women, are also at work in the district, with the exception of a small and diminishing grant from the C. M. S. amounting in 1907 to about £8, all the funds for the support of the pastorates and for the up-keep of the church buildings are raised locally.

I have frequently heard statements by men resident in the Colonies that natives profess Christianity only for what they can get out of it; what have such critics to say in the face of such facts as I have just quoted? These native Christians not only give their money in support of their Church, but frequently suffer contumely and persecution from their Buddhist friends and relations on account of the Faith which is in them.

Who is there having a sense of the undying laws which make for Righteousness, whether a believer in the Catholic faith or any other faith, or in no faith at all, who is there I say, who, having seen these things with his own eyes, can contemplate unmoved this devoted band of workers? The European members of the mission especially, and they are types of workers all over the world, command our respect, our prayers and the best financial help that we are able to offer them. They are giving the best years of their lives, their health and strength, and when they possess any, their private means in support of the cause of the Master whom they serve. I see no signs of the luxurious homes and easy-going lives which some critics will tell you are characteristic of missionaries. On the contrary they are leading hard-working, self-denying lives in an exceeding hot, damp, trying climate and you can plainly see the drain on their health and vitality which is going on.

I speak as an ordinary layman, and I say that it is the duty of those at home to support the utmost of their power those devoted workers who are labouring under what frequently are most disheartening circumstances to lift up the cross amongst those who know it not, and to maintain against all odds the Honour of the Christ Whom we profess to serve.

E. A. Browne.

Latest Notes.

The Medical Board in London has decided that it is desirable for the Rev. S. M. Simmons to defer his return to the Mission until the autumn.

We regret to say that the Drs. have decided that Miss Leslie-Melville must go home. She will therefore probably be leaving at the end of May.

We had hoped that the Rev. G. S. Karney would have been able to come to Ceylon accompanied by his daughter, but we are sorry to say that he has had definitely to abandon the idea.