

Missions to the Heathen.

No. XXV.

DIOCESE OF ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

THE
POOMINDIE MISSION,
DESCRIBED IN
A L E T T E R
FROM
THE LORD BISHOP OF ADELAIDE
TO THE
Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

"The Heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when
I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes." - *Ezek. xxxvi, 23.*

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR
THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL;
AND SOLD BY THE
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
GREAT QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS;
RIVINGTONS, BELL, HATCHARDS, AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.
1853.

208.53.

Price Twopence.

THE following Letter from the Bishop of Adelaide, besides giving an account of the present state of this interesting Mission to the Heathen Aborigines of SOUTH AUSTRALIA, contains many references to previous proceedings at Port Lincoln, the history of which may be found in the following places:—

The barbarous and disgraceful murder of natives, by which Port Lincoln acquired an evil notoriety in 1849, is described in the *Annual Report* for 1850, page civ.; the marriage of two converted natives, *Annals of the Diocese of Adelaide*, page 70; the original plan of the establishment at Port Lincoln, *Colonial Church Chronicle*, vol. iv. page 352; the removal of the Institution from Boston Island to Poomindie, and a detailed history of its first year, *Colonial Church Chronicle*, vol. iv. page 467, and vol. vi. page 63.

The Native School at Adelaide, from which the present Mission may be considered to have originated, has given, not long since, gratifying evidence of [a] good effect; see the account of TAKAN-ARRO in the *Gospel Missionary*, vol. ii. page 161.

A valuable account of the superstitions of the natives of the adjoining colony of WEST AUSTRALIA was published in the *Colonial Church Chronicle*, vol. v. page 346

THE
POOMINDIE MISSION,
AT
PORT LINCOLN, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

Port Lincoln, Feb. 14, 1853.

My DEAR SIR,—Having long been desirous of visiting the native Mission at Poomindie, trader Archdeacon M. B. Hale, to ascertain its progress, and report to the *Society* upon the degree of success with which his disinterested efforts have been blessed, I gladly avail myself of a favourable opportunity; and, embarking in a small coasting trader of fifty tons, "the Banderoot," which plies between Adelaide and this place, reached the settlement on Thursday, Feb. 3, having left home on the preceding Monday. It lies 190 miles by sea west of Adelaide. Like every other district, it has been temporarily drained of its male population by the gold-diggings of Victoria; but since my last visit in October, 1849, a few cottages, and the pretty church of white limestone, have been erected, showing signs of progress even in this thinly peopled township. On the first occasion, when I visited this place in July, 1849, I gave you the particulars of a melancholy ride to the scene of destruction, where five natives had



fallen victims to flour, mixed with arsenic, which they had stolen from a shepherd's hut. On my second visit, I had the satisfaction of joining in marriage a native couple, Nytchie and Kilpatko, in the presence of the Governor, Lady Young, and Mr. Moorhouse, the Protector of natives, and many others, in the Court-house. It is with gladness of heart that I now am able to report finding this same couple living happily together at Poomindie, under the Archdeacon's eye; the husband shepherding 1,800 sheep, and his wife hut-keeping for him, at regular wages, with rations. This omen of success is happily corroborated and followed up by other instances of solid progress in industrial habits, civilized life, and Christian behaviour. After officiating, together with the Archdeacon, in the church, (St. Thomas's,) on Feb. 6th, when I confirmed five young women, residents of the place, we left for Poomindie early on Tuesday morning. The road winds along the picturesque shores of Boston Bay, and after crossing the pretty little valley of the river Tod, brought us to cottages and huts, which form the Mission settlement of Poomindie. Besides the clap-boarded cottage in which the Archdeacon lives, three others accommodate the schoolmaster, the overseer, and the working foreman. Fourteen smaller huts contain eleven married native couples, and the other, children of both sexes. A kitchen and offices, washing-shed, &c, complete the present hamlet of Poomindie; at some distance above and below which, on the river,

three other stone detached cottages also belong to the Mission, The "Native Reserve," set apart by the local government for the use of the Institution, comprises a fine grassy park-like plain, at the base of a range of hills of moderate height, which afford pasturage for between 3 and 4,000 sheep. This Native Reserve is so essentially connected with the plan of the Mission, that I must here enter at some length into the peculiar nature and difficulties of a Mission to the Australian Aborigines, which not having been sufficiently provided against, have caused the failure of every attempt hitherto made in this and the neighbouring Colonies to reclaim, civilize, and convert these interesting though degraded relics of our common humanity.

Unlike the other portions of the Malay race, which appears more or less to have peopled the various groups of the Pacific Polynesia, the Australian possesses not even the simplest implements or arts of social civilization. The inhabitant of the South Seas cultivates his provision-ground, owns property, builds houses, canoes, makes cloth or matting, fish-hooks, stone adzes, builds temples, worships idols, acknowledges a kind of feudal chieftainship; the Australian, on the other hand, makes nothing beyond a spear, or cloak of skins, a small net or mat of grass to hold the roots he digs up, or the opossum skins which he preserves. A few branches torn from the trees form his shelter; he owns no superior in his tribe, holds all property in common; is but a wandering hunter within the limits of a certain territory; engaged in

frequent feuds with neighbouring tribes; treating the wives as slaves, and by a tyrannical polygamy appropriating them to the old men of the tribe, or from time to time relaxing this custom into promiscuous intercourse, occasionally driven by starvation to practise infanticide, and even cannibalism. Such is the degraded state of the native Australian, and such the difficulties of taming, educating, and Christianizing these bond-slaves of Satan.

In the conversion of the South Sea Islanders, it is well known how much *native* agency was employed, and how the conversion of some chiefs facilitated the overthrow of idolatry in many of the islands. The Missionary in Australia is deprived of all such instrumentality. He has no mind sufficiently developed on which to work ; and there is no native authority which, when converted, is able to teach and influence others. The intellect of the *wild* Australian *adult* appears incapable almost of being reasoned with. The next step was obviously to bring the young under education. This accordingly was successfully attempted, and the young Australian was found as capable of being taught as his white brother. Nevertheless, here also many drawbacks and difficulties were to be encountered. If the schools were established in the "bush," then there was the counteracting influence of the elder natives, the filth of the "worley," the contamination of native customs and rites, and the seductions of the immemorial "corobbery." No sooner was the grown-up girl or boy in some measure tamed,

instructed, and impressed with the truths of religion, than the former was claimed as the affianced wife of some elder kinsman; and the latter was summoned to go through the initiatory rites by which he was admitted to the rank of "young man," and permitted to have a wife, if he could get one, as the number of men appears to be considerably in excess. Even *in* Adelaide, where a flourishing school was established near Government House, under the watchful superintendence of successive governors, the attention of the Protector of Natives, the care of a really Christian schoolmaster, and the pains-taking instruction of several earnest-minded Sunday teachers, the above difficulties disappointed the hopes, and frustrated the endeavours of those who wished to preserve and convert the remnant of the native tribes.

No sooner had the parents of the school-children paid their autumnal visit from the banks of the Murray to Adelaide, than a message, secretly conveyed, would empty the school of the elder girls; or, suddenly, several of the older boys would disappear, leaving their clothes behind them by the bank of the Torrens, or the trees of the park lands. It became evident, therefore, that unless the children could be isolated from native associations and influences, nothing permanent could be effected. Hence the idea of removing the elder ones to an adult Institution at Port Lincoln, on the western shore of Spencer's Gulph.

Again, although the situation of the native school

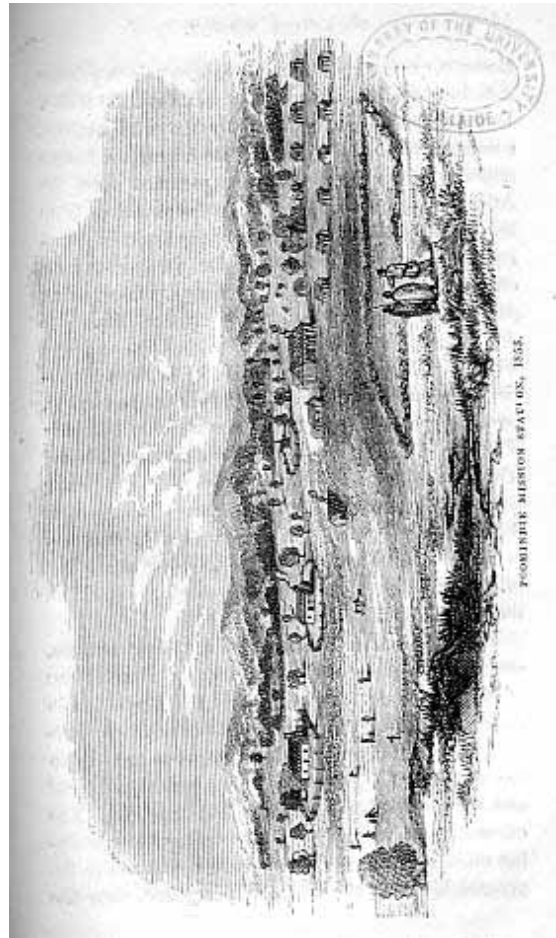
in Adelaide accustomed the children to the sights and sounds of civilized life, while daily schooling and attendance on Divine worship every Sunday, with religious instruction; could not fail to tame the savage nature, open the mind, and, perhaps, impress the feelings, or awaken conscience; yet the examples and opportunities of vice were abundantly supplied, counteracting, no less effectually than native influences, all efforts at conversion. Religious impressions were produced from time to time, but were subsequently impaired or effaced by European contamination. There was no asylum or refuge for the youthful convert or catechumen. Hence the plan of an extensive "Native Reserve" in the country, annexed to the Mission Training Institution. It had also been the defect of the school-system in Adelaide, that *industrial* education was not sufficiently employed. The natives were taught to read, write, and cypher. They were put in possession of the *signs* of ideas, without having acquired the ideas themselves. They could do a sum in addition, but knew not practically the value or proper use of money. They were not educated to be labourers or mechanics. Their play-hours were spent in practising throwing the spear, or in dancing "corobbery." I repeatedly saw and heard them while visiting at Government House.

Much has been said in proof of the impossibility of converting the natives—of two girls who, after having been employed as servants in that establishment, subsequently returned to native life and habits.

But what are the facts? They were not suitable wives for Europeans; if married to natives, they must needs belong to their affianced husbands, or run the risk of being *spearred*. Few or no colonists would have taken them as domestic servants, unwilling to take the necessary trouble with them, or exercise the requisite patience; and thus, after a few months or years of schooling and superficial civilization, together with a little Christian knowledge, rather than a real change of heart, they were thrown back upon native life, or became the degraded victims of European vice. Their case only demonstrated the necessity of an Institution, such as the Archdeacon has succeeded in setting on foot, for the reception of the elder native children who had been partially educated at Adelaide, at the most critical period of life, when approaching manhood. He devoted himself to the holy object of converting, if possible, the remnant that was left, and saving them from the ravages of disease and infamy. The principles on which he proposed to proceed, were pointed out by past experience and former failures. They were isolation, industrial education, as well as the usual schooling; marriage, separate dwellings, hiring and service for wages; gradual and progressive moral improvement based upon Christian instruction, Christian worship, and Christian superintendence. Without disturbing the school at Adelaide, (which he proposed to leave as an elementary training establishment,) he desired to draft, from time to time, the elder boys and girls to the Mission Station at

Port Lincoln. Thus, isolated from native pollution and temptations to vice in Adelaide, he proposed to educate, to *employ*, and to Christianize them. Hence, a considerable tract of land became necessary as a Native Reserve, on which they might be maintained and employed in the various occupations of an Australian farm and sheep station. For this purpose, Boston Island, which closes Boston Bay, Port Lincoln, to seaward, containing about four square miles, was pitched upon for the Mission. It affords pasturage for 1,200 sheep, as well as land fit for agriculture and garden-ground—the opportunity of fishing—and is near enough to the settlement to procure medical aid, and the supply of other wants of civilized life. Here accordingly the Archdeacon landed, Sept. 9, 1850, with five married couples and one native lad, besides a schoolmaster and carpenter. A tent was pitched for the females, and a hut, quickly constructed, for the Archdeacon and his companions.

Here evening prayer was held by the little band of Christians and Catechumens, the commencement of that system of social worship for the Mission at which, during the last week, I was privileged to assist on several occasions. The inability to find fresh water, after sinking several wells, necessitated removal, after a sojourn of a few weeks, to some better watered spot. Poomindie, on the river Tod, was accordingly selected; and, in order to carry out the system of isolation and industrial employment, the surrounding district was proclaimed a Native



Reserve, exempting it, therefore, from sale to private individuals. It includes a small run for 3,000 sheep. Fear of being put to death by the wild natives, according to the prevailing custom among the native tribes, was thought a sufficient restraint upon the Adelaide school children, to prevent them from leaving the station; while the various duties of farming sheep and cattle herding for the young men offered the best means of training these young people to the habits and duties of civilized life. The Archdeacon had first to gain their confidence, and win their affection. His simple, kind, firm, Christian earnestness—teaching, controlling, reproof, governing in short, with enlightened charity, these children of the bush—has at length been blessed with a considerable degree of success. Many young adult natives, who would have belonged to the most degraded portion of the human family, are now clothed and in their right minds, sitting at the feet of Jesus, and intelligently worshipping, through Him, their heavenly Father.

The Mission now consists of fifty-four natives, comprising eleven married couples; the rest children of either sex, thirteen being from the Port Lincoln district. The married couples have each their little hut, built of the trunks of the shea-oak set up in the ground, the interstices being neatly plastered and whitewashed, roofed with broad paling. The other children in small divisions occupy the remaining ones. They have their meals in common in the general kitchen; the working party first, then the

women and children. Naming, one of the elder young men, assisted by two mates, is steward, butcher, and cook. At half-past six in the morning, and after sun-down, all assemble at the Archdeacon's cottage, for the reading of Scripture and prayer. The Schoolmaster, Mr. Huslop, leads the singing of a simple hymn, and the low soft voices of the natives make pleasing melody. A plain exposition follows. After breakfast they go to their several employments: the cowherds milk, &c.; some were engaged in putting up posts and rails for a stock-yard; the shepherds were with their flocks; two assisted the bricklayer, one preparing mortar, the other laying bricks. At the proper season they plow, reap, shear, make bricks, burn charcoal, cut wood; do, in fact, under the direction of the overseer, the usual work of a station. Six hours are the limits of the working day; they are unequal to more. Shepherds and first-class labourers receive 8s. per week and rations; second-class, 5s., third, 3s. 6d., fourth, 2s. 6d. The younger children attend school; the married women wash, and learn sewing clothes, making and mending. Such is an outline of the occupation, education, and religious training adopted at Poomindie, which, begun with very limited means, and with no previous instance of success to encourage hope, has nevertheless, through a blessing upon the Archdeacon's patient, untiring, quiet zeal, reached a very promising state of maturity. Thus far the Institution is an exception to the list of Australian Missionary failures.

Let us look at the present results, under the heads of Civilization, Moral Training, and Christian Attainment.

1st. We find eleven married couples decently clothed, clean in their persons, keeping their own huts and clothes in order, and much attached to each other—in the place of the promiscuous unchastity, and the brutal degradation of the native women in their wild state. A farm of twenty acres has been fenced, plowed, reaped, and stacked, by these children of the soil; two flocks are wholly under their charge. These they have shorn, besides two other flocks belonging to settlers; and five were just about to shear the lambs of Mr. Peter, at eighteen shillings per hundred. I saw an excellent kiln of bricks which, under the direction of a brickmaker from Adelaide, they had helped to make, mould, and burn. In fact, while the other settlers at Port Lincoln were much hampered by the migration of their servants and shepherds to the Victoria Diggings, the Archdeacon was able to carry on the improvement of the Mission premises, the labours at the farm, as well as assist his neighbours with native shearers, who shear remarkably well.

2d.- In regard to Moral Training, the wild native knows little or nothing of the value of money or property; but at Poomindie the Mission lads earn weekly wages, and, what is more, "shop" for themselves at the store in Port Lincoln, or even send up orders to Adelaide for goods. This indicates a real mental and moral development. The following

purchases were made by one of the Mission natives, Kewrie, for himself and friend, while I was present: a pair of shoes, two pairs of trowsers, a blue woollen shirt, a packet of currants and raisins for puddings, a flask of salad oil for the hair; a bonnet was looked at for his wife, but left for her determination, and a shawl for the throat rejected as being too dear. The same youth, had he been left to native influences upon leaving school, would probably have become, after a short time, a dirty, ragged, diseased, lazy sheep-stealer, or an occasional hewer of wood and drawer of water for some of the inhabitants of Adelaide, or settlers in the Bush. He is now a nice-looking, decent, intelligent, well-conducted young man.

3dly. With respect to Conversion. When the Archdeacon came in from Poomindie to meet me, he was followed by ten of the elder boys and young men, who asked leave to go and meet the Bishop. Some I had known in the Sunday School at Adelaide. I was agreeably surprised to see them nicely dressed in the usual clothing worn by settlers; cheque shirts, light summer coats, plaid trowsers, with shoes and felt hats—articles mostly purchased with their own earnings. They were better dressed than the labouring class in general at home. They had brought their blankets, blacking, brushes, &c, making the broad verandah of a wool shed their sleeping-place, and cooking their meals at a fire in the yard. Not far off was a small native camp, and the contrast between these two groups would have

convinced any candid observer of the truth for which the Archdeacon has always steadily contended, viz. that the Aborigines are not only entitled to our Christian regard, but are capable, under God's blessing, of being brought out of darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

It was very pleasing to see these young men, on Sunday morning before church, sitting together reading in their Testaments or Hymn-books, which they had brought with them, and afterwards filling, at both services, two benches in the pretty little church. Most of them were Catechumens, whom the Archdeacon thought he could recommend as fit to be baptized. Accordingly, on Thursday the 10th, at Poomindie, I conversed severally with ten men, and Tanda, the wife of Conwillan, in the presence of the Archdeacon. The native manner is naturally shy, reserved, and incommunicative, but gentle and unimpassioned. After hearing them, and asking them questions, I agreed with the Archdeacon that there was good ground for admitting them by baptism into the ark of Christ's Church, believing them to be subjects of God's grace and favour. We held regular evening service at sundown; and after the second lesson, I baptized Thomas Nytchie, James Narrung, Samuel Conwillan, Joseph Mudlong, David Tobbonko, John Wangaru, Daniel Toodko, Matthew Kewrie, Timothy Tartan, Isaac Pitpowie, and Martha Tanda, wife of Conwillan. The other women and girls are not yet so advanced as Martini and Annette, a little Swan River native, who has

long formed part of the Archdeacon's family. Each native answered for himself distinctly, according to the service for Adult Baptism, and, from their devotional manner and previous answers, I have reason to believe that they understood and intended to keep the vow which they then voluntarily made. On the following morning I consecrated the cemetery, where the remains of those who have died repose. Of these, eight in number, *three* in addition to Takanarro (of whose last illness and happy death I sent you a printed account), gave strong evidence of their dying in faith and assured hope.

I must here observe, with respect to this mortality, that, compared with Europeans, the ordinary native is slight in frame and feeble in constitution, easily brought low by sickness, and pining away often from unaccountable causes, principally pulmonary complaints, aggravated by their own thoughtlessness and roving mode of life. The seeds of disease have also been widely spread through the native tribes since their contact with Europeans; and hence the dwindling away of the race from premature death and fruitless marriage.

One more incident I may mention in proof of their progress in civilization; a cricket match played by the Poomindie lads and young men, on a holiday given on the occasion of my visit. I was pleased at watching, with the Archdeacon, two Australian native "elevens" thus enjoying themselves; and remarked, not only their neatness in "fielding and batting," but what was far more

worthy of note, the perfect good-humour which prevailed throughout the games; no ill-temper shown, or angry appeals to the umpire, as is generally the case in a match of *Whites*.

I have little more to add, than that the Mission is again strengthened by the accession of Mr. George Wollaston, son of Archdeacon Wollaston, who will act as overseer of the sheep and farm-labour. A good schoolmistress is shortly expected from England, and thus the education of the younger boys and girls will be well carried on. A new school-room is projected, and subscriptions are collecting for the purpose. It appears to me that the Mission is so consolidated as to admit of gradual enlargement. There is now a small body of trained Christian natives, the nucleus of the native Church. The Archdeacon, and all friends of Missions, have reason to thank God and take courage. His blessing will never fail to attend enlightened zeal, chastened and sustained as that is, in Mr. Hale, by Christian love and firmness of purpose.

I sail in a few days for Adelaide when the wind serves.

Yours truly,

REV. E. HAWKINS.

AUGUSTUS ADELAIDE.

P.S. We set sail on Saturday the 19th, and reached Adelaide on Monday morning, after a quick passage.