Letter of Punnathra Mor Divanyasios III (d. 1825) to Church Mission Society, published in "The Christian Journal and Literary Register" for the year of our Lord 1823 from Newyork

February, 1826.]

The Chrysostom

Letter of the Syrian Metropolitan to the Society.

A letter has been addressed by the metropolitan of the Syrian church, to the president and members of the society. Extracts from this very interesting document here follow, from a translation of it, out of Syriac, by professor Lee:

May this letter come in peace and safety to lord Gambier, head of the society which is in the church of England, from the school of Cotym!

JAH,

In the name of the eternal and necessary existence, the Almighty.

Mar Dionysius, metropolitan of the Jacobite-Syrians in Malabar, to the authority of our father, Mar Ignatius, patriarch, who presides in the apostolic see of Antioch of Syria, beloved of the Messiah. Love from Christ, and from the people of all the churches, to lord Gambier, the illustrious, honourable, and renowned president; and to our brother, Mar Henry, the extraordinary bishop of the city of Gloucester, and to the priests, and deacons, and true Christians, great and small, in the church of England, who are devoted to these things, and are mindful of them, who both assist and provide that we should teach and preach the precepts of our Lord Jesus Christ. Love from God, and from the only-begotten Son, and from the Holy Ghost, be with you all evermore! Amen.

Beloved, kind, and honoured brethren in Christ, we would make known to you, in a few words, what has happened to us from the depth of our poverty.

We, who are called Syrian-Jacobites, and reside in the land of Malabar, even from the times of Mar Thomas, the holy apostle, until the death of Mar Mattai, were taken in the reign of king Purgis, kept the true faith according to the manner of the Syrian-Jacobites, of real glory, without division or confusion. But, by the power of the Franks, our Jacobite-Syrian fathers and leaders were prohibited from coming from Antioch: and, because we had no leader and guide, we were like sheep without a shepherd; or, like orphans and widows, oppressed in spirit, without support or help. By the power and dominion of the Franks, moreover, and by the abundance of their wealth, and the exertions of their leaders, all our Syrian churches in Malabar were subdued, and turned to the faith of the pope of Rome.

In the year of our Lord 1563, came our spiritual father, Mar Ignatius, the patriarch, from Antioch, to Malabar: but, when the Franks knew this, they brought the holy man to the walls of Cochin, imprisoned him in a cell, and gave no small money to the king of Cochin. They then bought him for a good man, and drowned him in the sea, and put him to death. But, when we knew this, all the Jacobite-Syrians in Malabar assembled in the church of Mathancherry, which is in Cochin, and we swore a great oath, by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that henceforth we would not adhere to the Franks, nor accept the faith of the pope of Rome: we accordingly separated from them. A short time after, some of our people again joined them, and received the faith of the pope.

Again, in the year of our Lord 1755, came to us some holy Jacobite-Syrian fathers from Antioch, who turned to our true ancient faith, and set up a high priest for us.

We now have fifty-five Jacobite-Syrian churches in Malabar: and, as the Franks are more powerful and rich than we are, they are hourly laying the trap of the pope for us, and endeavouring to take us in; and, from the power of a kingdom filled with idols, the heathen have subdued us Jacobite-Syrians, just as Pharaoh, king of Egypt, subdued the children of Israel, and had no pity.

And, as the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, and delivered the children of Israel from the house of bondage of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; so the Lord hath delivered our brethren from the hands of the Franks, and has restored us to our seat as members of Christ's church. And we, who are the followers of the true faith, are as the true Israelites, who were delivered from the hands of the priests of Egypt. We are now in our own land, and our enemies are subdued, and our children are saved from the yoke of the heathen. And we, as the true Israelites, are now delivered from the hands of the Franks, and have regained our liberty. And we, as the true Israelites, are now delivered from the hands of the Franks, and have regained our liberty.

respects to you, and to all your friends.

We have heard, too, that the people of your land are beseeching God for us, that he would supply and complete that which is defective and imperfect, both in our bodies and souls.

Respecting Samuel the priest, who is held in honour by us, we received the letter which he sent by the hand of Joseph the priest; and we read and understood what was written in it, and very much did we rejoice, with exceeding great joy, on account of your friendship for us. And may the Lord, who both hears prayers and grants petitions, lengthen your lives, and increase your peace!

But we call to mind the adage, "A glance is enough for the intelligent," and avoid prolixity. Besides, James, the honoured priest, will make known to you all that is going on among us.

And I, the metropolitan, Mar Dionysius, your friend, very cordially salute you: also Abraham the priest, our obedient servant, and all the deacons, and children that are in the school. All the priests, moreover, and deacons, and the whole congregation of Christians who are in all the churches in Malabar, salute you. May grace be with you all: even so. Amen!

Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

Remain firm in the power of Jesus! In the year of our Lord 1821.

On the third of the month Rami the first, Friday.

From the school of Cotym.

(Signed) Mar Dionysius,
Metropolitan of Malabar.

* Mr. Bailey.  † Mr. Penn.  ‡ Mr. Buker.