

THE CALCUTTA MISSIONARY CONFERENCE.

"The Catholic Presbyterian" for April contains the following summary of the decennial Missionary Conference recently held at Calcutta.

1. The Conference commenced with the methods of mission work. Very naturally the place of honour was given to missionary "preaching," on which subject papers were read and many speeches delivered. There was nothing perhaps very new to be said. It seemed to be thought that, in the past, missionary preachers had been often ill prepared for the work, especially in respect of a thorough knowledge of the vernacular languages.

The place of "Higher Christian Education" as a missionary instrument obtained a cordial recognition. The Rev. Mr. Blacket of the Church Missionary Society, a member of the Educational Commission which has been for some months moving about over India, said that his interest in missionary schools had been not a little quickened by the evidence which had lately been given in his hearing. Many natives had testified in their favour. On the other hand, the hostility which had been manifested to them by natives and others was unequivocal evidence of their power. A Canadian Baptist—"a vernacular missionary," as he called himself—mentioned that in his own field he had had experience enough of the advantages of the Higher education, and he expressed the strong desire that it should be strengthened at every possible point and in every possible way. "As the time goes by," he said, "its work will appear to be more and more important." Dr. Chester, of the American Board of Missions, spoke in the same strain, stating that during the twenty-one years he had spent in India he had felt the "greatest obligation" to those men who were working it. "The General Assembly's Institution," another American testified, "is doing a great work."

At the same time, it should be said that there were some dissonant notes. Mr. McGrew, of the Methodist Episcopal Mission, affirmed that the "policy of high English education in the Presidency town had proved a failure." "Where," he asks, "are the thousand of young men moulded by Duff and Murdoch and Wilson? They are not in this assembly. They are in the Bramo Somaj." However this may be, we believe that the state of matters among English-speaking educated Hindoos is very different from what it would have been if they had all got their training in the presidency colleges. The acting principal of the Serampore Institution declared that though he could not tell of a single convert, he still believed in his work. His pupils left him with their attitude towards Christianity entirely altered.

In regard to "Mass," or "Lower" education, which, in one aspect or another, was very frequently referred to in the Conference, all missions make use of that; and in various forms it is used as distinctively evangelistic. There are as many as 4,350 native Christian teachers, an increase of more than 2,000 since 1871; and what is of special interest, the increase of *non-Christian teachers* in mission schools is slight. The Propagation Society sets in this a good example. Ten years ago its Christian and non-Christian teachers were just about equal in number, now it has 645 of the former and only 100 of the latter.

Among other forms of mission work of which notice was taken in the Congress, we may mention Sabbath schools, which have been conducted with great vigour and success, especially by the American Methodists, medical missions, orphanages, boarding schools, etc. The very touching and striking fact was stated by the chairman of the Conference, Sir H. Ramsay, that during the year 300 girls had been baptised in a leper asylum.

2. Another set of papers dealt with work among Mohammedans, Aboriginal tribes, and English-speaking Hindus. One half of the Indian Mohammedans, it is stated, are to be found in Bengal. They are there "the poor and illiterate;" and in their ignorance and bigotry, so far as conversions are concerned, retain an almost unbroken front. But in some other parts of India Mohammedanism is less rigid and immovable. In the north and north-west, Western influences are telling. A new Moslem school has arisen, the leader of which "professes to have studied all modern religions, and claims that in Mohammedanism he finds the reconciliation of the spirit of the Koran and the Bible with modern discovery." And Syed Ahmed Khan is not a mere speculator. He has built a college

at Allgarh, in which his views are carried out. The foundation-stone was laid eight years ago by Lord Lytton, and now we are told it has the names of nearly 300 students on its rolls. According to the chairman of the Educational Commission, this remarkable institution, "recognizing the special spiritual needs of the Mohammedan youths, *bases its teaching on the truths of Western science.*" Something of the same spirit of compromise, it is said, has been manifesting itself in Southern India. What may come of this it is hard to say. It is not without its dangers, as a Scotch missionary suggested; and certainly its significance, from a Christian point of view, may be greatly over estimated. Islam, lax and philosophical, may be found less friendly to Christianity than Islam traditional and bigoted.

Peculiarly interesting and very important, as we think, were the papers and speeches on "Work among Lower Caste Hindoos and Aboriginal Tribes." It was stated that these two classes form a majority of the population of Bengal, and a large proportion of the entire population of India. They are very accessible—no "national, physical, social, or governmental obstacles" bar the way to them. But they are not only accessible—they are friendly; the preacher scarcely ever fails to get a cordial welcome from "these common people." Among some of the thinly scattered mountain tribes the success has not been great; but among the Coles and the Santhals the converts are counted by thousands. The Christian population of Chota-Nagpore, in connection with Gossner's Mission, amounts to over 30,000. The organization of native pastors, elders, catechists, and teachers, appears to be very complete. A theological seminary, in which twelve natives are studying for the ministry, is also in operation. "The converts," said one of the missionaries, "have a very encouraging missionary spirit, and their lives tell powerfully on their heathen neighbours. The Cole Christians are wonderfully simple and powerful in prayer." Among the Santhals the work is full of hope. "A good-hearted lot they are," said one who commenced work among them ten years ago, and now reports fifteen villages in which Christ is worshipped. "No work," says a Church Missionary Society man, "is more interesting or successful than that being carried on among the Santhals. And the winning of these tribes to Christ, let it be remembered, would not be the winning of a few thousand mountaineers, but of a nation, for they number not less than three millions."

The past decade, too, witnessed notable success among the lower classes of Hindoos. At Ongole in the Madras Presidency, the American Baptists report 20,000 converts, mostly gathered in since 1878. In that year a great movement commenced. It has gone steadily on ever since at the rate of from 1,500 to 2,000 converts a year.

Not a very hopeful field of mission work is afforded in the English-speaking Hindoos. From the thoughtful paper of Mr. Alexander of the Free Church Mission at Madras, on through all that followed, there was very little to encourage. The class referred to, now very numerous, it seems hard to reach. Separated to some extent from their own people, and yet kept at arm's length by Europeans, they are not in a position likely to minister to sweetness of temper. One remark painfully struck us. It was said or hinted that these people were not expected to make their appearance in the English Churches. There are other castes besides those of Hindoos. The Baboos of the smaller towns—where, as well as in the presidential capitals, they are numerous—are very accessible to Christian influence.

3. Another subject was the "Self-support and Self-propagation of the Native Church." Things are greatly more advanced in this respect than many have any notion of. Twenty years ago the Tinnevely Mission was carried on by sixteen European missionaries. Now it has only four Europeans, one of them the Bishop, and the other three engaged in educational work. The pastoral work is in the hands of natives, and the native contributions amount to £2,500 a year. "Our Tamil Missions," said a native C. M. pastor, "have made much progress in self-rule and some advance in Church extension. The native Council is *bona fide*—the chairman, secretary, and members all being natives." The C. M. S. Santhal converts build their own chapels and pay more than half the stipends of the native clergy. We have seen that the Gossner Mission is largely wrought by native pastors and catechists; they get half their sup-

port from the native congregations. "My first mission field," said the Rev. M. Timpany of the Canadian Baptist Mission, "was Nellore. At the end of six years there were between 700 and 800 communicants, and ten village school-house chapels were completed, and twelve more were a-building. The only outside help the people got was from the Central Church, which gave to each erection a door, a window, and five rupees." "I know" said Mr. Timpany, "that Indian Christians will give out of their poverty." In Ceylon, the American Board of Foreign Missions has thirteen native churches, all but three of them self supporting. Their 1,000 members not merely support their own ministers in a suitable manner, but they contribute £70 a year for native missions. A native Ceylonese having a humble Government appointment, will contribute an annual sum, at the thought of which a broad-acred laird would not long ago have grown pale, and which would have startled even a stiff well-to-do Seceder accustomed to put his hand in his pocket.

We shall briefly allude to the papers on "Woman's Work in the Indian Missionary Field." These—all by ladies—were not the least notable. The Eurasian and Foreign Female Mission agents have increased by more than a fourth, and the Zenana pupils have grown from 2,000 to 9,000. More remarkable still, a thousand more native Christian females are in the mission-field in 1881 than in 1871. Everything indicates still greater progress in the coming years.

ADVICE TO CONVERTS.

The Christian character of most persons who unite with the Church is practically determined the first few months of their Church experience. If they begin by cultivating a habit of cheerful obedience to duty, for example, if they begin by modestly taking part in social meetings, as a rule, this will be a preparation for usefulness. There are so many *silent* Christians, from whom you never hear, and from whom in conversation you can scarcely get anything satisfactory. Begin by feeling that you are a part of the church and have your work to do, and furthermore *do* it.

Be an intelligent Christian, a Bible reader and a Bible student. Be intelligent in the work of your church and denomination. Take a good denominational paper and read it.

Read missionary intelligence, home and foreign. Inform yourselves about denominational societies, educational matters, so that if God gives you money as you advance in life, you may know how to use it wisely as His steward.

Be an intelligent, large-minded, great-hearted Christian.

Be a benevolent Christian. This is the best type of a Christian; don't wait to have large sums to give before you begin to give; that policy is destroying the usefulness of thousands in our churches; but begin to give with the little you have now. Form the habit of regular giving and of systematic giving. Set apart so much of what you receive, and give it wisely and for the love you bear Christ.

Be an honest Christian. Never take advantage of your church membership for personal ends. Never borrow money if you can possibly help or avoid it, and when you do, then pay it when you promised it, if you have to sell the shoes off your feet. Keep your word if it kills you. If you are a Christian you can afford to die, but if you are a Christian you can't afford to lie.

Again, support your church. This is not charity nor is it benevolence; it is debt. Your covenant vows bind you to the support of your church; give what you feel God will approve and bless.

Finally, attend the meetings of your church on the Sabbath, the Sabbath school, the social meetings of the week. Work for your church. Love it, and cherish its good name, and the good name of its members and officers.

Be an earnest, growing, happy, faithful Christian. For the Master has need of such, and such Christians make a live church.

EVERY morning, before you see the face of men, register this prayer in heaven. "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe, and I shall have respect unto Thy statutes continually." Are you going down-stairs without that prayer? Then you may fall into sin at the breakfast table. You may lose your temper, and a tiffle not worth noticing may put you off the tram-lines for the day. Therefore, pray ere the car moves.—*Spergeon.*