

MISSION FIELD.

[From the S. P. G. Mission Field for October].

MISSION WORK IN WESTERN INDIA.

[CONTINUED.]

The first difficulty which hindered Mr. Lord from stationing Catechists in the village, Shilewadi, was that he could not then get a house in the place. There were plenty of suitable houses, and their owners were willing to let them, but all efforts failed until the beginning of this year. The arrangements were invariably spoilt by the interference of the Brahmans. At last he found a man who was willing to build a house on his own ground. The agreement was signed and the house built. Mr. Lord sent the two Catechists he had chosen for the place with their families, he himself going down to see them settled in their new home. There soon arose trouble about the water supply. This Mr. Lord had remedied; but a greater difficulty arose from the Catechists being unwilling to remain at an outpost, wishing to return to head-quarters.

'I am sorry to say,' adds Mr. Lord, they did return, bringing in all their goods etc., which I had only a short time before had taken out at the cost of Rs. 6 to the Mission. I have refused to pay for them a second time, and though the men have returned they have not taken their families; one, I think, only went when he understood that his appointment being in the districts, no pay would be forthcoming for days spent in Kolhapur. I mention this mainly not to disgrace the Catechists, but as an instance showing with what bad material we have to work, and how imperative it is that one European Missionary should be free to go out himself and be in the forefront of the work. The fact that the mission agents, with a few exceptions only, have little zeal for the work itself is mainly the cause why there are no results to our work. It often seems that we do more harm than good from working in a half hearted way, and the people estimate our religion by the zeal we take in propagating it; such as, in the greatly curtailed district which I now work I go round it but once a year. I trust that the work now started in the district will be kept up and go on well.'

We can judge from such a passage as this what some of the evils of keeping a Mission undermanned are.

Another of the Missionaries in this diocese, the Rev. H. Lateward, who is stationed at Kamatipura, raises a grave question about the native Catechists. We express no opinion upon his views one way or the other but quote what he says simply as an illustration of the anxious nature of the problems that face the Missionaries.

'For a long while my thoughts have been directed to the question of how far 'paid' mission agents—I mean in the sense of evangelisers—promote or hinder conversions; and an opinion has been growing upon me that they not only do not pro-

mote conversions, but are an actual hindrance to the work. Allow me to explain. First, I would premise that I am not referring to those employed as teachers in schools, or where the work is secular in the main; next, my experience had not been only to Bombay, but for nearly double that time at the Deccan Stations; and lastly, that my experience of working without a catechist extends only over two years in the town of Bombay, where, in addition, the greater part of my time has been taken up with English work, thus allowing little leisure for work among the heathen, and yet I consider the net result as better than usual.

Among its advantages I would first mention the leisure it gives for teaching the inquirers oneself, because one is not required to devote his time and energy to the Catechists and others. I do not wish to be unfair, and I admit that among the numerous staff of workers, native, in the Ahmednagar Missions there are instances of earnest men, and that good results are the result of their efforts. On the other hand I think that a large proportion of catechists, &c., in this diocese are a distinct source of weakness.'

The numerical weakness of the European staff of Missionaries is again painfully evident in all this.

The Society has increased its grants to the Diocese frequently. Ten years ago it voted £3,500, now it has voted for next year £5,225. The supply of men has not advanced with the means, and the Rev. Chas.

King sends a strong appeal for clergymen from England for the great Ahmednagar Mission.

'Now that the Rev. J. D. Lord goes on furlough, three priests only will be left. One of these must remain at headquarters in charge of the educational establishments, leaving two only to minister to a huge district of some 2,500 square miles with over 4,000 Christians scattered in about 200 villages. Year after year we have had to report that numbers of the baptized have practically apostatised from the Faith; and we have again and again pointed out how impossible it is with our small staff to prepare the Confirmed for the Holy Communion. Yet now in 1890 the staff will be smaller than it was when I first joined the Mission 11 years ago. The staff of the Roman Mission is being greatly increased, the American Congregationalist Mission, although it has not increased the number of its missionaries, yet has greatly increased the number of its native pastors, and our staff is less, both as to Europeans and natives, than it was in 1880. I know from the reports that the Home Society is doing all that it possibly can with the small funds at its disposal, but do you not think that a special appeal might be made?

With a larger staff we might venture to baptize the many thousands of low castes who are wishing to become Christians. I see no reason why the whole of the Mahar Mang and Bhil castes should not be made Christians, but at present we are unable to minister to those who are

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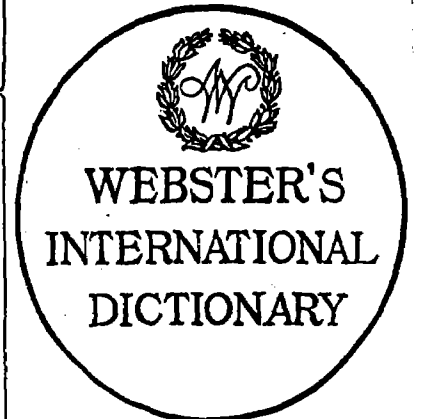


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already baptised, so are compelled to refuse the invitation of others. Many congregations of Christians are not even visited by their priest once a year; children are left unbaptized; it is impossible to personally undertake the instruction of those to be Confirmed; Communicants are unable to approach the Blessed Sacrament even at Easter; and the sick and dying are wholly neglected.

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