

men has been almost entirely, in the providence of God, the work of England. Let England's Church come forward to take her proper share of the choicest souls—the souls of men.

Story of a Conversion in South India.

The scene lies at the small village of Mettupatti in the Estate of the Rajah of Pudukotai, about fifteen miles south of Trichinopoly. Mission work was started in this neighbourhood thirty-five years ago by the Rev. C. S. Kohlhoff, but no progress was made, for caste, idolatry, and superstition have a terribly strong hold. There is a class of Hindus here called Nayakars, steeped in prejudice and ignorance. They have as their head a man known as the Pattattu Nayakar, i.e., royal or titular Nayakar, who is ceremoniously enthroned when he succeeds his father as Headman. He also has a horse, which is known as the Pattattu horse, and he rules the caste like a petty Rajah. Any Nayakar who disobeys him is fined or excommunicated. All complaints, whether religious, secular, or social, come before him. No marriage is valid unless solemnized in his presence. It is needless to say that no one may become a Christian without being excommunicated and subjected to every kind of petty persecution. The ceremony of excommunication is performed as follows: First, all the Nayakars are assembled by special messengers under the command of the Headman. Then seven pits are dug; after this a black lamb is killed, and its blood poured into the first pit, and water into the remaining six. Next the presiding *Pandaram* dips his finger in the blood, and marks a round spot (*pothu*) on the forehead of each Nayakar present. Then he takes water from the other pits and sprinkles it on their heads. After discussion on the circumstances of the case, excommunication is pronounced, and, as an outward sign of this, the leaves of the margosa tree are taken and thrust into the thatched roof of the excommunicated man's house. From this moment any Nayakar who should dare to eat or drink with him will himself be excommunicated. Even his nearest relations must refuse henceforth to speak with him. No water may be drawn from the public well, no dhoby may wash his clothes, no barber may shave him, and no carpenter, blacksmith, etc., may work for him.

Such obstacles being placed in the way, a man requires a very firm faith to embrace Christianity. One young man of twenty-five, however, dared it all. He, his old mother, brother, and widowed sister, with her three children, went through the excommunication and endless persecution that followed; and I had the pleasure of baptizing them on the Vigil of All Saints' Day. The young man took the name of Yesudasen (Servant of Jesus), and he has shown himself to be worthy of his name. They were taught

for some months previously by Mr. Daniel, the M.D.C. catechist, to whose efforts, under God, their conversion is due. One of the most trying moments was when the younger sister, still a Hindu, came with her husband, and threw herself at her aged mother's feet, and, bathed in tears, implored her not to disgrace them and cut themselves off from them. Her mother wept, too, but said she could not give up her faith in Jesus Christ. We pray that this daughter also may be won over in time.

A few words may be said of Yesudasen's history. He had not always lived in his native village, but had mixed with more enlightened men. He saw how they were practically slaves, and how the Christians were comparatively free. He attended church once at Trichinopoly, and, as he says, a shock went through his heart and he felt he must become a Christian. Later on, when passing the idol of Rattamalai Karuppan (a fearful god) he did not break a cocoanut to it as usual. When his mother asked him why, he said, "It is only a stone god." He was for some time, however, afraid of making an open confession, because he knew full well the persecution in store for him, and the fact that he could not get a wife. The catechist, however, warned him of his unsafe state, and he made his resolve. He was then sent for by the Pattattu Nayakar and refused to go. He was next summoned to a meeting of the caste and again refused. About 500 of them were present. As he would not come, some of them went to him and tried all day to persuade him. When that failed, they sent next day his nearest relatives, as mentioned above. Finally, they proceeded to the ceremony of excommunication. Besides the ordinary penalties which followed, they carried off his property, stole his bullocks, trumped up cases against him, and got him fined in court. Not content with this, they subjected all the other Christians in that neighbourhood to petty persecution. They also insisted of course on a debt of Rs. 40 being paid immediately. This money was advanced by the Mission. Next the Headman tried to carry off the children of his widowed sister, but here again we intervened and took the children into our Boarding School. He also had been urged to leave the place, but he says "No," he will stay and face it out. Does not all this show that the Gospel still has its ancient power?—*Rev. J. A. Sharrock, in The Mission Field.*

Religious Education

In a debate recently held in Dundee some significant speeches were made, and opinions very much like those we have heard or read expressed in support of the "half-loaf better than none" policy of seeking the right and opportunity of teaching in the Public Schools in Ontario, to the children of Church people, the

distinctive principles of the Church to which we belong. No attempt is here made to give any speech in full, the passages more generally appropriate to all circumstances only being given.

The Bishop of Edinburgh (Dr. Dowden) in his remarks said: What I would like to see would be a first-rate Church school in every congregation. But I must look at facts, and I must look at probabilities, and I agree entirely with the gentleman who said we might as well hope for the moon as hope for a Church school in every one of our congregations. Look at the position in Edinburgh. A motion was brought forward at the School Board by Mr. Bruce, and by a single vote we were refused access to the Board schools to teach. It would be a pure advantage to us to be able to go into these schools and teach our own children. When I was a young man I did it for six years in the Board school. No doubt we had a Presbyterian minister teaching in another room, a Methodist minister in another. These were inevitable factors in the case; but still, I rejoice to say that a good sound Church education was given to the children over whom I had charge.

Mr. Bruce—I think that, of all the questions which come before us, the question of education is, not only for this Church, but for the State of which we are members, the biggest problem of all. It is perfectly true what a speaker said the other evening, that a wave of materialism does seem to be passing over this country, and I am afraid that the fear of God and trust in Him is being thrown into the background. You are getting by degrees in this country to a frame of mind so openly avowing belief in expediency instead of belief in what is right. The Bishop of Edinburgh has just alluded to the matter coming up recently before the School Board of Edinburgh. I, as a member of the School Board, had the privilege of raising the question; and I would like to endorse what the Bishop has said—that the School Boards of this country just now are, I think, in a most reasonable frame of mind with regard to the admission of fair claims. There is one thing that I think not only the parents but also the School Boards of the country are to be congratulated upon—many of them, especially the large Boards, have made a most careful provision for general religious instruction being given in the schools, and in the schools of Edinburgh, where there are 30,000 children being daily taught, the percentage of children who are withdrawn from religious instruction only amounts to two. That shows the keen feeling that is beating in the hearts of this country, that, in the face of the tendency of the present day towards materialism in many districts, parents are absolutely as one on this—they wish their children to have the benefits of religious education. I think a very strenuous effort should be made to do a great deal more in the Board schools than we do at present. Let me point out two ways in which we could do so.