

Each section of the evangelical portion of the Church is active and zealous in equipping and sending forth missionaries to show the poor Heathen the way of salvation, some choosing one portion and some another of this waste and howling wilderness. The Church of Scotland has for some years past been expending a large portion of its means and energies upon the reclaiming, or enlightening of certain parts of our vast Indian empire. We may easily understand that among a people of so many different races and beliefs, whose superstitions have been the growth of centuries stretching back to the dawn of history, the work of conversion to any appreciable extent must be well nigh hopeless. Still who can tell what God in His providence has in reserve for even the weakest instruments. Our success, small as it is, compared to the ocean of error and ignorance before us, ought to encourage us to persevere. Our very difficulties ought to be incitements, and every new opening, nay, every individual instance of a poor sinner brought from darkness to light ought to be a matter of rejoicing. Let us remember that this great country embraces an area nearly as large as Europe and a population three times as great as the whole continent of America. Nearly the whole of this vast territory is either directly or indirectly under British control—feels to some extent the privilege of British institutions and the protection of British laws.

But that spirit of universal toleration so characteristic of the doctrine of Christianity has prevented us from thrusting even gospel truths upon the natives. Their superstitions dark, degrading and sensual as they are, have always been and are still respected, perhaps too much respected. In this spirit we rejoice, though it will never be appreciated either by the ferocious Mussulman or the pliant and crafty Hindoo. In order to establish Christianity in the heart of even one Hindoo, we have not only to convince him of its truth, but what is of far greater difficulty, to break up the whole superstructure on which society is built. Caste has been, and will be, our greatest and all but insurmountable difficulty. To become a Christian in India, is to become an outcast in its most literal and terrible form, to be shunned by all as a wild beast, to lose name and character and home and family and friends—to lose caste—that

most dreadful of all misfortunes in the eyes of a native. Is the slow progress of truth then to be wondered at? Nay, is it not rather to be wondered that we should make any progress at all? Yet glory to the Most High, progress we are making in the face of all these difficulties. Were we to use the arguments of the Mussulman conquerors—fire and the sword, beyond all doubt, India within a short period would become a land of at least nominal Christians, for after all, the one idea possessed by the Hindoo about being made a Christian, is not by force of argument, but that he will be obliged to break his caste. If this happens, even by accident, he is lost beyond recall; should he eat flesh, or eat with a Christian, or even out of a vessel used by a Christian, he loses caste—he is nothing, and this is the constant source of dread in which he lies lest by this means he may be forced into Christianity. Religious belief is with him not a mental but a physical process, which may be received by the mouth, not by the understanding. This was no doubt the cause of the fearful insurrection which lately spread over India like a consuming tempest; the greased cartridges were believed to be nothing more or less than the means by which they were to be deceived into Christianity.

It is very evident that to attempt to make much impression upon the great mass of a population so constituted is nearly labor thrown away. There is the difficulty of language, and the far greater difficulty, the prejudices and jealousies of the people. They are to be reached chiefly through schools, and by educating and supporting native teachers and preachers, by building up a native Christian ministry. Both these plans are being carried out with great vigor and success by our Church in all the Presidencies, and on a constantly increasing scale. Their effect will be seen and felt on the rising generation, and an influence silent but irresistible will be at work on these dense masses of humanity, widening and deepening, as the blessings of European civilization, and the elevating spirit of gospel truth are being more experienced.

We had intended to present our readers with an abstract of the General Assembly's Report for last year on this important scheme but regret that we have mislaid the paper.