

TALKS ON BOOKS.

The Rev. George Milne Rae, M.A., Fellow of the University of Madras, who was for a time professor in the Madras Christian College, and who is now Dr. Rae, Secretary of the Free Church Colonial Committee, wrote recently a book of 388 pages, entitled "The Syrian Church in India." All students of the second year in theology know about the Nestorians and their missions in the East. At the Oecumenical Council of Ephesus, in 431, Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, was deposed for opposing the Mariolatry of the Alexandrian School, headed by the infamous Cyril, who instigated the murder of Hypatia, and, like the Jews whom he persecuted, was contrary to all men. The worthy patriarch refused to admit that the Virgin was "the Mother of God," and was consequently hounded to death as a pestilent heretic. Some heresies of yesterday are the martyr or confessor saints of to-day, but even the Reformation failed to right Nestorius, who in our Protestant text-books of theology still gives his name to one of the heresies concerning the person of Christ. His followers in Syria had to contend, not only with the orthodox or Catholic party, but also with the Monophysite disciples of the monk Eutyches, who, in his zeal against the patriarch, invested Christ with but one nature. These Monophysites in the middle of the sixth century were revived by a mendicant ecclesiastic named Jacobus Zanzalus, from whom they took their modern name of Jacobites. Persecution drove the Nestorians out of Syria into the Persian Empire; the Jacobites dwell in their native seats to the present day.

Early in the present century, Dr. Claudius Buchanan visited India, and gave an account of his experiences in his "Christian Researches in Asia."

Before his time, various writers had mentioned the Syrian Christians and the Black Jews of Malabar, but he was the first to enlist the attention of the Christian world in favor of these two interesting peoples. He found the Malabar Christians, to the number of 400,000, to be the descendants of a mission planted by the Nestorians in ancient days, in full possession of their rites and ceremonies, and of the Peshito or Syriac version of the Scriptures. What Dr. Buchanan merely sketched, Dr. Rae, with greater facilities and more extensive information and experience, has related at length, so that his work virtually tells us all that is to be told concerning the Syrian Church in India.

Dismissing as improbable, or at least as unproved, the ecclesiastical legends and traditions of the christianizing of India by the Apostles Thomas and Bartholomew, and by the later missionaries, Pantaenus, Frumentius and Theophilus, he finds sure historical ground in the statement of the Nestorian merchant traveller Cosmas, called from his Indian visit Indicopleustes, that a Nestorian Church existed on the Malabar coast in his day, that is in 522. Dr. Rae is of the opinion that the church had not been long planted in India when Cosmas discovered it, and that it was one of the fruits of Persian maritime activity which only dated from the beginning of the sixth century.

The twenty-one chapters of the book contain Introductory Matter and the History of Three Periods, the Nestorian, Roman and Jacobite. The ancient or Nestorian period extends from the founding of the Church, as a mission of the Patriarchate of Babylon, till 1560, when Portugal, having taken possession of the coast, authorized the Jesuits to