

THE TELUGU MISSION OF THE C.M.S.

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The Telugu Country proper extends from Nellore, north of the Pulicut Lake, to Orissa, a distance of 400 miles of coast line, and from the Bay of Bengal to Hyderabad, east and west 200 miles. But the Telugu language is spoken far beyond these limits. In and around Madras and elsewhere Telugu villages are numerous.

It is computed that sixteen millions speak the Telugu language, which is called the Italian of the east. A very large proportion of these are Brahmins, who are a highly cultivated and learned class. They are the governors, priests, and teachers of the people. Having taken to English freely they form the bulk of the official class in cities, and are open to the Christianizing influences of our educational missions. A very large section belongs to the artisan castes—these form a guild of their own. Goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, braziers and masons make one caste; they are most intelligent and well read, crowding into our schools, and are always ready to buy Christian books and tracts.

Cultivators of the soil, mostly Sudras, form the backbone of the population. Malas, Chucklers, and other low castes help them to till the land. All these are, as a rule, unlettered, and have few thoughts beyond the present world. They are full of superstition and ignorance, and are entirely open to Gospel teaching in the vernacular. Malas and Chucklers in every part of the Telugu country are ready to receive the Gospel. Their masters of the higher casts despise the Gospel, which comes to them discredited by its universal reception among the despised Pariahs, who invariably throw off the shackles of ignorance and oppression when they become Christians, and in many instances their sons are educated in mission schools and become teachers to the children of their oppressors and take a high place in native society.

For more than a hundred years the English governed the Telugu country before any attempt was made to bring the Gospel into the land. At last, about the year 1840, a number of officers and civilians living in Masulipatam combined together for the purpose. They collected money and applied to the C.M.S. for a missionary, but in vain. Nothing daunted, they looked about for their own agent, and God gave them Mr. Noble, one who had long determined to become a missionary. He found the Rev. H. Fox. These two fathers of our mission were prepared to enter on their work as a private venture; but the C.M.S. at length came to their assistance, and in 1840 sent them out to commence the work in Masulipatam. Mr. Noble began a school for the higher castes. Mr. Fox undertook vernacular preaching, and these

two branches of the work continue to the present day, each developing in its own way, and bearing precious fruit as years rolled on.

Mr. Noble's idea was to establish a Caste school of a high character, and by the power of Christian principle to break down caste, and bring Brahmins and other high castes into the kingdom of God. Unfortunately, the policy of excluding all but caste pupils had the effect of fostering caste principles. It was only in quite recent times that the school was thrown open to all properly qualified pupils. When boys of Pariah origin were admitted, the schools were emptied for the time of all caste pupils, but when, long afterwards, Christian boys of Mala origin were admitted for the first time into the Noble College, not a single pupil left, thus showing what an enormous advance has taken place in liberal views among the caste people as time goes on.

The jubilee of the Noble College was celebrated two years ago. Fifty years of Christian work by the best and ablest educational missionaries has told for good upon the population. It has had a marvellous success in evangelizing the educated classes. Far and near Christ is known, honored, yea, and believed on, by the highest and most influential in the land. I do not know any other agency for making Christ known and felt in these classes except our educational work. Preachers in Bayaar and Festival come across them, more or less, but never effectively. School and college is the only way at present apparent for bringing Christ home to the heart and head of the upper castes, and it is not in vain. A wonderful knowledge and appreciation of Christian doctrine has been taught during the time. Not a few known to us, and many more known only to God, have believed on Jesus as their Saviour, though not called Christians, and multitudes have felt the power of His word on their heart and life, and have abandoned idolatry for ever. It is calculated that twenty-five caste converts were baptized in Mr. Noble's own lifetime, and it is not merely heads that count in these conversions; the influence on the population is very great, and the help given by these brethren in the work of school and preaching is incalculably precious.

It was a grand sight to see these converts gather round Mr. Noble's table—ten or twelve of them together when I first knew them. Men of high rank came to enjoy Mr. Noble's hospitality, but the Brahmin converts were never sent away, and that in a land where the highest native official has to stand in the presence of his European superior. Mr. Noble went to Madras and other places in holiday times, but he never would go without his converts—they were always with him, and he was a man that could impress himself on others. These converts, as they grew up, showed such a sterling