

Defect of life and character, not unknown among their countrymen, are hardly ever heard of among them. They are observed and criticised in no friendly spirit, and if they fell or failed not a few of their own countrymen, now whispering only vague insinuations, would with ceaseless virulence and ill-concealed pleasure proclaim their guilt. Even a portion of the so-called religious press in England is in haste to prejudge and condemn them, as recent incidents have clearly shown. Thus they are workmen who need not to be ashamed. Added to character is their faith. They believe they have a divine message to communicate, associated with which is a power to enlighten and change even the worst of men, such as belongs to no other religion or any philosophical or social system. Thus they are made strong and competent for great and various service. They write and compile and translate many books and tracts. They are zealous educationalists. They are indefatigable preachers, usually offering the Gospel to the poor and ignorant, but ever ready to converse or argue with any class, and doing this habitually not only in the towns where they reside, but over a wide extent of country, in towns and villages, at festivals, fairs, markets, to a crowd or a small company by the wayside. The most learned of them—and they have never been few—have translated the whole Bible into every widely spoken Indian language. They have a book and tract society, with a great variety of publications in three or more languages, in at least six great centres, issuing an aggregate of some millions of pages of good, sensible Christian literature each year. They have to aid them not only the 4288 native ministers and catechists already mentioned, but also some thousands of school-teachers. As the result of these varied agencies, a vast amount of Christian information is spread abroad, leading more or less to many changes in opinion, sentiment, and usage far beyond the avowedly Christian sphere. This should be noted in any fair estimate of missionary results. And they are part of the inevitable outcome of the attempt to convert a great race, individually timid, speculative, conservative, and collectively drilled through ages to accept without question an extraordinary system of faith and usage. The Christian Church is embarked not only in the attempt to convert individuals who are as difficult to influence as Jews, Romanists, and Mohammedans, but the stupendous task of converting an immense empire, long under the domination of the three most powerful superstitions the world has ever seen. The best efforts in the former direction often fail, but nevertheless contribute more or less toward the latter. Education, for instance, is markedly doing this.

The Government is worthy of high praise for its policy in giving, not only a superior education to the rich and high caste, but for providing common vernacular schools for the masses. It is neutral on all religious questions, and it is not easy to prove that it should be otherwise. But the missionary schools are all avowedly Christian and propagandist. The Bible is habitually read and explained. The best treatises on the evidences of Christianity are used as class books. The common lesson books