

Him who has said : " And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." And again : " All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth ; go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost : teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you : and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

SEVENOAKS, KENT, June 1, 1888.

JAMES CALVERT.

THE KARENS.

[Paper read before the Conference by Mrs. W. F. Armstrong. It made a deep impression.—Ecc.]

THE only apology for my appearance here this evening is that I am the only Karen missionary attending this Conference, and so noble a people should not be passed by unnoticed. Thousands of them are praying for us, and it is right that we should remember *them*.

The Karens were once the hill tribes of Burmah, treated by the Burmese with the greatest injustice and cruelty. While they were under the Burmese Government they hid themselves in the jungle on the mountain sides, concealing the paths to their bamboo homes, and constantly moving from one place to another to avoid detection. They were content to live on the produce of their gardens, to weave their own clothing, and to be as independent in the forest as the birds or the bees.

Their religion was peculiar to themselves. They lived *pure, honest, truthful* lives—I speak advisedly—they were unbounded in their hospitality, had *no idols* ; but made offerings to propitiate the demons whom they feared.

They had no books, but they had carefully preserved traditions of a book they once possessed to which they were disobedient, and it was taken from them. Some day—so their legends ran—their white brethren would come across the sea in ships and bring back the book which told of the Great Father. They retained much of the moral and historical parts of the Old Testament in sayings of their old men, and it seems probable that they had at some time had access to its sacred pages.

No wonder such a people should receive the gospel when it came. No people have ever been discovered who were so prepared for it or whose very prejudices were on its side. When missionaries came among them their old men said, This is what our fathers told us of, it is this for which we have so long waited ; and they flocked by hundreds to receive it. Not without change of heart. Their simple faith took Christ at His word ; the Spirit accompanied that word. Though they were ignorant and untaught in schools, they came forward eagerly to learn, believing with all their hearts, and receiving the promise of God " to every one that believeth."

An entire change has been wrought among them in the last fifty years. Now there are over 450 Karen parishes, each one of which supports its own native pastor and its own village school, and many subscribe largely to send the gospel farther on.

There are about 30,000 baptized communicants, and fully 100,000 nominal Christians, about one-sixth of the whole tribe in Burmah.

A marked characteristic of their Christianity is that they are earnest foreign missionaries. They have their own foreign missionary society and send out their own young men to distant countries and other languages, supporting them there and re-enforcing them as the need arises. These have opened up new fields of labor where other missionaries could not reach ; they have taken educated and devoted Karen wives to assist them, and have undergone