

Mission Field.

A BIBLE-CLASS AT TRICHINOPOLY.

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Having felt for many years that the missionary work systematically carried on in our college was not followed up after the students left the walls of our institution to enter different walks of life, I was anxious to devise some means of reaching our ex-students, and reminding them of the solemn truths which they had been taught in our schools; and, accordingly, finding that I could spare an hour or two on Sunday afternoons, I resolved to devote that time to the furtherance of the spiritual welfare of our old pupils and their friends. On Advent Sunday, 1889, I sent an invitation to my neighbors, who are either Hindus or Mahomedans, and one man responded to my call. I read with him the Epistle for the day, drawing his attention to the words, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand, let us therefore cast off the works of darkness," and pointed out to him the necessity for "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ." The attendance on the following Sunday was encouraging. More than ten persons, all residents of my street, came in at the appointed hour. I began my address by reminding my friends of the interest I take in their general welfare; and that at this time I did not meet them as their municipal councillor or hon. magistrate, but as an ambassador of God. I had a message to deliver to them; were they willing to listen? When they gave their assent, I spoke to them of sin, and exhorted them to accept the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. A few sensible questions were asked, and they were answered; and discussion followed. At parting they thanked me for my interest in them, undertaking to attend regularly every Sunday. Finding that the class seemed sufficiently promising, I communicated my plan to our Principal, who warmly supported me, supplied me with a number of tracts and pamphlets intended for the use of educated Hindus, and, on the following Sunday, attended the class himself and addressed these inquirers.

The work has now been kept up for these three years, and large numbers of townspeople have heard the Gospel. I applied to the Madras Auxiliary Bible Society, and they generously sent me twelve copies of Tamil New Testament. St. Luke's Gospel was first read through; we are doing St. Matthew. Finding that some of my friends entertained

the idea that Christian teaching was not inconsistent with their own idolatrous system, I have lately followed the plan of beginning the day's work with expounding the denunciation of idolatry by one of the Prophets—taking the hint from the letter written by Rev. Mr. Burnett, of White-chapel, to the *Times*, after his visit to India and the East.

The class is composed of men in all ranks of life—Brahmans, non-Brahman caste Hindus, Mahomedans, landowners, traders, retired Government officials. One student brought with him a Sivite revival-preacher; another, the head of a Sivite monastery; a Tamil Pundit, an ex-municipal councillor, and an hon. magistrate of the town. The questions and difficulties of each were in accordance with his attainments; and I was glad to find that my replies, which contained plain but at times painful truths, were always listened to with respect.

It will interest Christian friends to know the sort of questions asked at these meetings. Once, when I had finished giving my reasons why a sinner must accept Christ the destroyer of sin, an intelligent listener said to me, very politely, that I had not fully understood the position of Christ, who was but one among the many Teachers of the world. These great men, he said, enlightened their own generation, and never meant that their teaching should be handed down to posterity. He asked in all seriousness whether Christ meant that the people of Trichinopoly, who have their own sacred scriptures, should hear His teaching. When I read to him the great last command, he said that in that case he must have appointed men to preach His Gospel to us; are there such men who can trace their official descent from Him? I explained to him the doctrine of Apostolic Succession, and said that I, their friend, was one so commissioned. I know some Christian people call the doctrine of succession an empty sentiment, but it produced a practical effect upon this honest and intelligent inquirer, who exclaimed that he was fully satisfied as to our Lord's intention that the Gospel should be preached to the end of time, and to all people. I added—to him also; and he replied, "Yes, I shall carefully read the Gospel," requesting permission to take one of the class-books home with him, to which I readily assented.

It is found that Christ is "the rock of offence." "Is it necessary to believe in Christ if I wish to please God? Will not virtuous actions gain us his favour? I replied that the question was not a new one; that Christ Himself was asked that question, and it had been answered by Him. I referred them to St. John vi. 28, 29: "Then said they unto Him, what shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.

(To be continued.)

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