

Gleanings from the Report of the Decennial Conference at Calcutta.

WORK AMONG ABORIGINAL TRIBES AND THE LOWER CLASSES OF HINDOOS.

Rev. Dr. Phillips, American Baptist Mission, Midnapore, said :

In Bengal the aborigines and the lower classes of Hindoos constitute the bulk of the population. There are three things about these masses that should cheer the missionary : 1. Their accessibility : No natural, physical, social, or governmental obstacles shut the path or break the hope of the ambassador of truth. 2. Their friendliness : Whoever has done village work, going from settlement to settlement, telling Coles, Garos, Santals, Hindoos of their great Redeemer, knows what a welcome these "common people" give the Christian preacher. The glad exclamation of the Santals comes to me, "The friendsabeh has come." And when my Santal friends have brought me a cot to rest upon and fruit and milk to eat, I have seen in their humble, hearty gifts the promise of that higher day when India will care for and cherish her own Christian Church. 3. Their docility. Higher up in the social scale you may find arrogance, pride, even disgust, at the work of the missionary ; but surely not here. His books are sought with avidity, the very poorest cheerfully paying for them, the sweet hymns of the Church in all ages are sung and our Lord's prayer daily and devoutly repeated. I believe there are many homes we know not of, where the Bible is regularly read, and many hearts known to God alone, that hang their every hope of salvation on the atoning merits of Jesus's blood.

In view of a work so inviting, permit me, honoured fathers and brethren, to present a few humble suggestions : 1. Every proved plan of Missionary work should be pressed into service for the masses. Our Lord's message is to the people ; and among the jungle tribes there are women, and children, and sick all in need of the same appliances that are used among larger communities. Also, let us give every jungle tribe the Bible in their own tongue. 2. Much depends upon our methods of work. And as intemperance is the prevailing vice of the masses, aboriginal and Hindoo, the man who wishes to win them must for their sakes, for Christ's sake, be a total abstainer from all intoxicating drinks and drugs. 3. Natives should be employed as largely as possible in this work for the masses. I do not mean a paid agency alone, but that supplemented by a strong force of voluntary workers. One thing I insist upon is that we who are their teachers must be their examples also. 4. Converts among the aborigines and lower classes of Hindoos should be encouraged to remain where they are and to retain their former calling. One of the very brightest tokens of our time is that Christian converts are no longer huddled together in mission compounds but are living in their own villages, worshipping Christ where once they adored Krishna. 5. The Bible idea of Church independence should be early inculcated and insisted upon. Many of us know how hard a thing it is to get a Church to understand this that has been fed and fostered and fattened on foreign funds. Our fine pukka edifices, built with mission money and kept in repair at mission cost, may be putting back and keeping back the day of church independence among a people who live in mud huts. 6. More men should be set apart for this work amongst the masses. Every clever man is not needed in Jerusalem. Our reports show that the villages have yielded more plentiful fruit from the seed-sowing of the missionary. Cannot some of the city work, e. g., schools, translation work etc., be carried with profit into the country and conducted as well or better there.

7. More of the time and strength of our missionary force, city and of fustill, should be devoted to itinerating. Millions of these denizens of our jungles and plains live, work and die where they were born. We must follow more fully in His prints who "went through every village preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." So was Paul's life that of an itinerant preacher. The greatest preachers of the

Church of every age have been the same. I freely admit that there was not in our Lord's time either the call or the conditions for our esteemed and indispensable educational and literary agencies ; but I cannot help remembering that it was this peripatetic ministry that during the first three centuries carried the Gospel to all the lands bordering on the Mediterranean Sea.

Rev. Mr. Boggs, American Baptist Mission, Ongole, Madras :

I regret the absence of my senior associate, the Rev. J. E. Clough, who was appointed to address you on the remarkable work of conversion among the Telugus at Ongole. We have 20,000 communicants scattered in about six hundred villages round about Ongole. There were upwards of 9,000 baptized in 1878, and the conversions have continued to take place ever since at the rate of 1500 or 2000 annually. They belong to a low class of Hindoos, above the pariahs and below the sudras. The principle our Mission has followed from the beginning has been evangelization first and education afterwards. We do not believe the Gospel requires a fore-runner, nor that Paul set up secular schools to prepare the people to receive his message of salvation. Our missionaries have always itinerated ; but the great success of our work has been from the labors of native preachers. The preachers are not educated, but they know the Bible and the way of salvation. We take them through a four years' course of thorough Bible study. Only one out of the total number of 120 knows a little English. Many of them were filthy, degraded, worshippers of the roughest idols ; but they have been so transformed by the Spirit of God that I listen to their words with amazement and pleasure, eat in their houses, enjoy their company, and love them as much as any others of my friends. We pay them five rupees a quarter only. The people supply them with grain and clothes. The character of these 20,000 converts is sincere and very simple. They are baptized on the profession of their faith in one invisible God, the Creator and in the Son of God as their Saviour. They confess their determination to abandon idol-worship and to obey the words of Jesus Christ. Most decidedly they are steadfast to this profession. They gain nothing whatever by becoming Christians, and they are often annoyed and even made to suffer loss by the village authorities.

PREACHING TO THE HEATHEN.

Rev. E. Lewis, London Missionary Society, Bellary, spoke on this subject as follows :

The question is still asked by many Europeans and thoughtful natives of this country. "What is your aim in preaching to the heathen? What do you expect to accomplish?" This question has been answered before. It is not difficult to answer it again. It may be safe to do so. Our aim is one and single—to lead the people to Jesus, that they may become new creatures in Him, live in Him and walk in Him. We seek to gain an influence over them, to win their affections with the one desire that we may lay the foundation of Christ's kingdom in their hearts. The theme of our preaching is not a mere creed, or a system of religious dogmas, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. There are many strong vantage points in the state, circumstances, traditions and hopes of the people where we come face to face, mind to mind, heart to heart with them, and from these points we labour to bring them to Jesus. We have never had much fellowship with any man in whom we did not find some reason for saying to him "Jesus is the Friend and Saviour you need."

I regard it as essential to effective preaching to the heathen that our hearers should have a full opportunity of asking any questions they may desire on what they have heard, that they may fully understand the practical bearing of the truths presented to them.

When the question is asked "What are the results of your preaching, it appears to be taken for granted that we shall hang our heads in sorrow and be silent ; but those who know what has been accomplished will surely thank God and take courage.

I wish to indicate a few of the many results of preaching which I know and which will not appear in any Statistical tables.