

THE MESSENGER.

an immense district to look after, and each has under him a number of catechists and schoolmasters. In all there are now about forty catechists and fifty schoolmasters. In Kandy, a town in the centre of the northern division, there is a regular pastorate, with fully ordained native clergymen, Bible-women, and other workers, and the society has lately sent out a lady, Miss Finney, to work amongst women there.

The missionaries spend their time going about the country, much of which is still in a very wild state, and they are dependent upon the kindness of the European planters, whose hospitality it would be impossible to speak too highly of. The journeys from estate to estate are sometimes enjoyable and sometimes quite the reverse. A ride of ten or fifteen miles in the middle of the day in the blazing sun, or in drenching rain is not exactly pleasant, nor is fording a river in monsoon weather. But fatigue and discomfort are forgotten as soon as the warm and cheery welcome of the planter is heard. After a quiet evening and a good, sound sleep, the missionary is awakened about 5.30 a.m. by a knock at the door and a call, 'Sar, sar.' Up he jumps, dresses, and hurries off to the 'muster-ground.' Two or three hundred, or even more, coolies will be gathered together, and for a few minutes he speaks to them of the Great Father of all, and seeks to lead them from the dim ideas they have of Him to the fuller revelation made by Jesus Christ. How that short time is valued, and how soon it passes away, and how many are the prayers offered that the message may be used by God to bring blessing to those who hear.

Most probably there will be a school somewhere near, and this will be visited during the day. Perhaps there will be a nice brick building, or perhaps only a mud and thatched shed. Still there will always be the bright, happy face of the master, waiting to welcome, and the hearty 'Good morning, sir,' or 'Salaam' of the children as they rise to greet the missionary. There will be wee mites there with scarcely any clothes on, learning to form their letters in the sand, and there will be bigger boys and girls of various ages and looks and clad in a variety of ways. Often does the missionary's heart burn as one and another of the children give bright and clear answers to the questions put, and declare that they do love Jesus and desire to follow Him, and he yearns that they may grow up to be true Christians, not only believing on Jesus, but living like Him amidst surrounding sin and ignorance. Many of the schools are supported by friends of individual missionaries and by others interested in mission work. Sometimes there are Christians on the estate, and the missionary will often go and gather them around him in the 'lines' and read God's Word and speak briefly about it, seeking to encourage and to lead to greater holiness of life and then commit all to the good God above.

There are now about 2,000 Protestant Christians on the estates, and the number is constantly increasing. There are of course amongst them not only the earnest, but the lukewarm and the backsliders. Many are faint and weak, and some are always stumbling and cannot stand alone, and do not seem to understand that there is strength in Christ to keep as well as salvation from sin's punishment. But, on the other hand, the missionaries are often wonderfully encouraged by the consistency of the great mass of Christians. Many planters will come forward and give the highest testimony as to their lives, and there are many ways by which the sincerity of their faith may be tested.

For instance, liberality is often a sign of

true spiritual life. If so, the native Christians are most decidedly genuine. Not only do they give liberally to the native church fund and to the building and up-keep of churches, but they are themselves supporting several catechists who are working amongst the heathen on the estates. Besides this, remarkable cases of individual generosity are constantly heard of. One man, a conductor, the other day spent Rs. 100 in purchasing a magic lantern and Rs. 900 on slides representing the life of Christ, and now goes about showing it to the coolies on estates, and speaking to them of the good things Christ came to make known. So earnest is he that he is thinking of giving up his employment, a very lucrative one, and becoming a catechist.

Or again, men often test the spiritual state of a Christian by his earnestness. Here, too, the Tamil shows that he is truly God's servant. It is no easy matter even for a native to get up and walk ten miles to church and ten back in the burning midday sun, and yet this is what many of them do. Now, is it a trifling matter for the catechists and schoolmasters to give up their time and all to the work when they could get much more remunerative employment elsewhere? nor for the Christians, as they often do, to stand up in the open air and testify for Christ?

Then, again, we can test their spirituality by their surrender to the will of God. An overseer on an estate built a small room, and had it nicely fitted up with doors and windows. Day by day he gathered together as many as he could, both Christians and heathen, read God's Word to them, and prayed. On being asked his reason for so doing, he replied, 'God has taken six of my children to Himself, now I want to win six souls for Him' (i.e., to have six spiritual children). There are many in favored England who could not say 'Thy will be done' with the simple faith of this poor uneducated Tamil.

And once more, by what they give up for Christ, by their reverence and devotion, and by their desire to know God's will, do they show that their profession is no mere empty boast 'to be like master,' but that God's Holy Spirit has indeed made them new creations in Christ Jesus. Not long ago a youth who had learned about Christ in one of the schools was turned out of his father's house for refusing to take an offering to the little 'swami (idol) house' on the estate, and a few days ago a man was beaten very severely for going to the schoolmaster's house to read the Bible and learn of Jesus.

There is discouragement and disappointment; but often do the missionaries rejoice and praise God for the grace He gives to those who seek to follow Him, and for the apparent reality of the Christian's faith.

Sometimes the seed sown takes root and springs up quickly and yields an abundant harvest. Two of the catechists at present working in Ceylon were laborers on estates, and first heard the Gospel at 'muster.' Now they preach to others and win others to the faith, of which a few years ago they themselves were ignorant. Sometimes the seed springs up after many years. A few years ago a young man was anxious to be baptized. His father was a bigoted Hindu, and opposed his son's conversion in every way, by entreaty and by threat. For some time the son wavered, but at last, in spite of all obstacles, he came forward boldly and was received into the Church of Christ. Last year the old father, who had so persecuted his son for believing on the Saviour, was himself baptized. With tears in his eyes he stood beside the font, one of his chosen witnesses being his son, who showed by the

smile on his face how intense his joy was that at length his father had yielded to the strivings of his Spirit, and had put his trust in Jesus Christ.

A Cradle Hymn.

Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber;
Holy angels guard thy bed;
Heavenly blessings without number
Gently falling on thy head.

Sleep, my babe; thy food and raiment,
House and home, the friends provide,
All without thy care or payment;
All thy wants are well supplied.

How much better thou'rt attended
Than the Son of God could be,
When from heaven He descended,
And became a child like thee!

Soft and easy is thy cradle;
Coarse and hard the Saviour lay,
When His birthplace was a stable,
And His softest bed was hay.

Blessed Babe! what glorious features,
Spotless fair, divinely bright!
Must He dwell with brutal creatures?
How could angels bear the sight?

Was there nothing but a manger
Cursed sinners could afford,
To receive the heavenly stranger?
Did they thus affront the Lord?

Soft, my child; I did not chide thee,
Though my song might sound too hard;
'Tis thy mother sits beside thee,
And her arms shall be thy guard.

Yet, to read the shameful story,
How the Jews abused their King,
How they served the Lord of glory,
Makes me angry, while I sing.

See the kinder shepherds round Him,
Telling wonders from the sky!
Where they sought Him, where they found
Him,
With his Virgin Mother by.

See the lovely babe a-dressing;
Lovely infant, how He smiled!
When He wept, the mother's blessing
Soothed and hushed the holy child.

Lo, He slumbers in his manger,
Where the horned oxen fed;
Peace, my darling, here's no danger,
Here's no ox a-near thy bed.

'Twas to save thee, child, from dying,
Save my dear from burning flame,
Bitter groans and endless crying,
That thy blest Redeemer came.

Mayst thou live to know and fear Him,
Trust and love Him all thy days;
Then go dwell forever near Him,
See His face, and sing His praise!

I could give a hundred kisses;
Hoping what I most desire;
Not a mother's fondest wishes
Can to greater joys aspire.

Isaac Watts.

You may not be able to leave your children wealth or the inheritance of a great name or eminent social advantages; but you can leave them the results of fidelity and precious memories of devotion to the holy task of trying to make them know what God says to us in the Old and New Testaments, and what he wants us to believe and to do and to be.—Dr. F. A. Noble.