

The Savaras of India.

Through an article from the Baptist Missionary Review by Mr. Higgins, forwarded to the MESSENGER AND VISITOR for publication some time ago, its readers have probably gained much valuable information about the customs and manners of the Savaras.* The main purpose of this article will be to tell what has been done for their salvation and with what success.

The Savara Hill Country forms the northern part of three of our fields, viz.: Palconda, Parla-Kimedi and Tekkali. Thus far we have had Savara converts only from the latter.

Let me begin with some extracts from our Mission Reports of the Chicacole field, in which those fields were until recently included. Miss Hammond, in her report of the field for 1880, writes: "The school or rather the teacher in Tekkali has had a pretty hard time. His house has been partly destroyed, his garden despoiled, and his clothing and cooking utensils stolen by those who were opposed to his Christianity and his school. Nevertheless he has persevered and the school from three to four has increased to a registered number of 22." In her report for 1881 she writes: "The teacher and school at Tekkali are still in existence, though the towns-people have made many efforts to abolish the Christian and his work. In compliance with the Ranees' orders, the peons either destroyed or took possession of everything in the Compound and forcibly drove the man from his house. . . . We feel that he is suffering more than one of our people should endure if it is in the power of the Mission to assist him. Yet such trials, borne for Christ's sake, will ultimately produce fruit to the honor and glory of His name. Even now there are evidences of good and we are endeavoring to strengthen and encourage him." In the report of 1882 we find the following: "Tekkali is said to be the hardest town in the district—but our best man is there. Gorahuthi still holds the fort bravely. He is not persecuted so severely by his former friends and is making many new ones chiefly among the lower castes. The miserable hut in which he lived after his sister-in-law, the Rancee, had destroyed his house has been replaced by a neat building sufficient for himself and his school. . . . His work is confined chiefly to teaching and to talking the gospel to those who live about him. He seldom goes into the town. His leprosy is not now as bad as formerly. Through his quiet but unremitting efforts a very hopeful spirit of enquiry is spreading in the town. The two converts baptized early in the year were from the school. Another pupil, Savara Venkiah, was baptized at Chicacole in April. His brother also received baptism in November. These young men had in some way been drawn into the school from their house among the hills and on leisure days had learned to read. Besides they got a knowledge of the way of salvation. On returning home after baptism they were received by their family and still continue to work their farm. . . . The Savaras are without a written language. They have one Government school near Kimedy, in which Telugu is taught. Two villages near Tekkali are asking me for schools. These two young men are partly fitted to conduct such schools and being intelligent and active may well inspire hope that here is the golden opportunity of reaching this hitherto neglected people."

The Chicacole missionary, in reporting for 1884, writes: "On July 26 our beloved helper Gorahuthi, the flower of our Mission, died at Tekkali, where, for nearly eight years, amid many bitter persecutions, he had nobly witnessed for Christ."

Through him six Parishes and two Savaras were turned from dumb idols to the living and true God.

Also in 1885 the same missionary reports: "Tekkali holds on well. . . . Two of the number baptized were from this place. The remaining three were Savaras—two brothers of Venkiah and the Savara boarding girl."

From the above extracts God's plan of starting His work among this Hill people is manifest. A man of the Rajah caste is converted in Tekkali. He is a Pundit, a pleader in the Court, but a leper. He believes in Jesus and follows Him, and so is outcasted and robbed of his property, but for nearly eight years is a faithful witness for Jesus. During a large part of this time he teaches a little school under some large tamarind trees in the outskirts of the town. The spot will never lose its sacredness. He first lives in a rude shed, then in a small thatched house alone. He secures in 1882 a divorce from his wife, who refused to live with him because he became a Christian, and is married in the following year to Herriammah, who was his concubine in heathenism. (I was present at the marriage). During his lifetime he sees two of his Savara pupils converted, and others, no doubt, influenced for good. The year following, Gorahuthi's death (1885) sees the baptism of three Savara converts—two of whom are the brothers of Venkiah (the first convert) and the third was a young woman, to whom he was afterwards married.

What has been done during the thirteen years that have since elapsed, it is by no means easy to summarize. In

1889, while a bungalow was being erected in Deodangar, our mission sanitarium, which is a few miles north of Kimedy, a daily average of about 35 Savaras were employed, and new ones usually came every three or four days. For several weeks we held two gospel services daily in Savara, Telugu or Oriya. Good was accomplished. Many of their villages have since been visited and it has been a joy to learn that the teaching was not wholly forgotten. Missionaries accompanied by their helpers have done quite a little touring work among them. The total time given up to direct evangelistic effort by Savara, Telugu and Oriya mission helpers has probably been not less than the equivalent of nine years for one man.

During these thirteen years referred to ten have been baptized making the number thirteen in all—most of whom are the near relatives of the first convert. Of those baptized three have died and one was excluded, making the present number eleven.

We will pause here to speak of the five who have been at one time or another Mission helpers. (1) Venkayya, aged about 32 and baptized 17 years ago, is a helper of long standing and a sensible smart fellow with a good understanding of the gospel. As he seemed to show more interest year before last in shooting and farming than in his work it was thought best not to hamper him but allow him to make a living in the way he seemed to choose, hence he was dismissed. (2) Goommana, his youngest brother, now about 24, was baptized in 1891. He is, probably the best man among them and gives evidence of being called of God to preach the gospel to his people. In common with Venkayya he can speak freely three languages, the Savara, Telugu and Oriya. They write the Telugu fluently and both may yet be of great service in the translation of the Scriptures into their own mother tongue. These two brethren are widely known and respected among their people. It is no uncommon thing for them to be visited by Savaras from a distance of fifty miles or more to consult them upon legal or other matters. (3) Lakshmayya, a third brother, who died about five years ago, at the age of thirty, received mission support for a very short period. He was capable of supporting himself and it seemed best to allow him to do so. He was an eccentric and rather unreliable character, but to his honor be it said, that wherever he went he talked the gospel. In the coming harvest he, too, will have a share. (4) Sundaramma, daughter of Venkayya's farmer brother, a girl of about seventeen, taught a little school in her own village during a part of 1897, after having spent a good term in our Chicacole Boarding School. She will probably become ere long the wife of him of whom I am about to write. (5) Papayya, now about twenty, was baptized in 1894. He was a diligent student in our Boarding and Day school for about two and a half years, and is now a zealous teacher in Laukapadu, a Savara village about five miles from Tekkali, and preaches also in all the surrounding villages.

Our Telugu Association and Missionary Conference were both held last January at Vizianagram. As we missionaries and native Christians thought of what the Lord had already done for the Savaras and of their perishing condition without the gospel, our hearts were filled with the desire to be used of Him in their salvation and, as many of your readers have already heard, a Savara Mission Board of seven members was then chosen. The purpose is to support the Mission, as far as possible, with funds raised in India. The present prospect is that our seven native churches will contribute pretty liberally. The Christians of the American Baptist Telugu Mission have volunteered for this year \$24. Chiefly because of the liberal donation of Miss De Praher, a Baptist lady apothecary who expects to visit the Maritime Provinces this year, the Board has now on hand more than three hundred dollars. At an early day we hope that one of our best Telugu native preachers will volunteer to go and dwell among them, and help lead forward to victory for Christ the Savara Christians.

Four of the members of the Board referred to with some other Telugu workers made a short tour among the Savara villages in the region of Tekkali in February. About 30 villages were reached, and the work seemed to open up hopefully. Mr. Subraidu, the Chicacole church pastor, returned May 3rd, from three weeks' labor among them, reporting that three young men were very near the Kingdom and that many others both men and women frequently heard the truth till late at night, and that three more of Venkayya's near relatives were asking baptism (two of whom have since been baptized).

The Savara Board has now but two workers—Gummana and Papayya. A Telugu brother may soon join them. Within a few weeks a Savara church may be formed and Gummana may be its first pastor. A mission family is needed at once for this work. We are praying that one of God's own choosing may soon be sent. Will not some who read these lines say "Here am I, send me?" and will not our churches joyously supply the necessary means?

I. C. ARCHIBALD.

Chicacole, May 15.

The San Francisco Meetings.

Three thousand Baptists are now gathered in this western city to deliberate on matters pertaining to the welfare of this denomination, which is 4,000,000 strong to-day.

The special train of twelve cars from Boston, bringing eastern delegates, arrived late Tuesday evening and was welcomed by a generous down pour of rain or as one of the ladies suggested "a few drops of joy at this the first session of the delegates to the May meetings west of the Rockies." They had been met at Sacramento by Baptist friends who literally deluged them with roses and other flowers. The San Francisco hosts have not fallen behind as flowers greeted the travellers in their hotels and the grave deliberations of the various departments of denominational work are carried on in a veritable bower of beauty at the Eddy Street church, where tasteful cypress garlands, pure white calla lilies and roses are massed in reckless profusion.

It is impossible to meet, with these devoted Christian workers as they daily crowd the large church without being thrilled with the grandeur and magnitude of the work they have accomplished and will accomplish more abundantly in the future.

A visitor must be struck with the thorough organization of each of the three departments of labor—The American Baptist Education Society, The American Baptist Publication Society and the Missionary Union.

At the session of the former the Baptists of the Pacific Coast made a strong plea for a theological school in the vicinity of San Francisco. At present a young man west of the Rockies has little encouragement to enter the ministry as he must go east for his theological training, and too often remains there, while others who cannot afford the expense of the long journey are gradually absorbed in secular pursuits. Rev. Alvah Hobart, D. D., of New York, in connection with this subject delivered a strong and discursive address on "The aims and methods of Theological Training." He pleaded for a more thorough study of the Bible and a greater familiarity with its pregnant truths.

Dr. A. J. Rowland, Secretary of the American Baptist Publication Society, addressed the Convention on the afternoon of the 25th. After reviewing what has been accomplished in three fourths of a century by this Society he gave a summary of the financial status. The receipts in the publishing department has been \$14,353,390 every cent of which after meeting necessary expenses has been devoted to mission work both at home and abroad.

The chapel car system is the child of this Society and in the evening Mr. Boston W. Smith, or Uncle Boston as he is called, the general manager of the cars, held the vast audience spell bound while he gave a lecture on the growth and results of this department of the work. From time to time he threw pictures on a screen illustrative of the points he made.

Dr. Wayland Hoyt was the first to suggest this means of carrying the good news to mining camps and little board-house towns scattered through these vast territories. Forty three railroads have extended all the courtesies of their lines and free transportation for these cars. Mr. Rust, one of the three chapel car missionaries present, told us that he once telegraphed a station agent to know if he could have a certain side track in a certain place where he wished to hold services. Back came the answer "You can have any track but the main line, if we haven't one to suit will build one." This is only one of the many incidents showing the hearty appreciation of the good work of these devoted young missionaries and their wives. In some places men with tears in their eyes have confessed that they have not attended a religious service for ten, twenty and even thirty-five years.

There are five chapel cars now in the field and a sixth is being built by young men who take "Five Dollar Shares" each. It is seven years since the first car, "Evangel", was constructed. The work of it and the others has been threefold—establishing churches and Sunday Schools in towns wholly destitute of religious privileges, strengthening weak churches and holding services for railroad men at division points. They report 71 churches organized, 54 meeting houses built, 55 pastors settled, 139 Sunday Schools started and not less than 7,500 persons have professed conversion in these chapel car services.

The car "Emmanuel", devoted to Pacific Coast work, is here side-tracked at the Southern Pacific R. R. station, and we had the satisfaction of seeing it for ourselves. As we approached it we saw the Stars and Stripes gaily waving from the rear platform, the usual invitation to a service. Passers-by gazed curiously at the gilt lettering outside—"Chapel Car Emmanuel" and in a corner this text: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believed on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." On entering we found ourselves in a long unupholstered car with a somewhat narrow passage with seats for three on one side and two on the other. At the far end of the assembly room were

*Unfortunately the article here mentioned failed to reach us, and our readers have not, therefore, the advantage of the information which it contained.—ED. M. AND V.