

## HISTORY OF MAHOMED ISMAEL.

(WRITTEN BY REQUEST.)

It is cheering and pleasing to understand that the missionary work of the church is yielding glorious fruit. We transfer the following autobiography to our pages from the *Church of Scotland Home & Foreign Missionary Record*, feeling assured that our readers will peruse it with pleasure and profit.

The moral character and intellectual standing of Mahomed Ismael we may learn from one fact which, in the modesty of the true gentleman, he does not state with reference to himself. He refused an honorable and lucrative appointment in the civil service of his country, preferring to enter the service of Christ in the ministry of the church, which, under God, was the means of teaching him the way of truth:—

“I was born and brought up at Bombay—a highly important seaport town in India. I derived my birth from parents who trace their descent to the illustrious Sayyad family of “Kadria.” The founder of this family was Abdul Kadir of Jelan, whose burial-place is Bagdad, and who is revered as its greatest saint all over the Mohammedan world. My ancestors came to India, during the Mogul rule, and settled in the territory now belonging to the Nabob of Juzera, a small island near Bombay. On their arrival they received a jageer (grant of land) sufficient to yield them the means of decent subsistence, and to secure for them a respectable social position among the Mohammedan nobility of the place. When the British rule had become established in the greater part of the Bombay presidency, my grandfather removed to that town, where he commenced life as a naval captain, being well acquainted with the art of navigation as then understood by the Arabs. This profession was continued in my family for nearly fifty years, after which it was abandoned, chiefly in consequence of the love of home with which it interfered. By this time the family had become sufficiently wealthy, and owned property to a large extent. In point of worldly circumstances, I think I can say that my family occupied a very enviable position among the Mohammedan residents of Bombay, till some disagreement among the members involved them in expensive litigation, which ended in the removal of my father to Juzira, where, besides being a jageerdar, he now holds the post of a revenue officer. Being brought up in the Sayyad family, I was early accustomed to condemn everything that had the slightest anti-Mohammedan tendency. This prejudice naturally operated on me as a strong check against all social intercourse with Christians, a circumstance which prevented, for a long time, my acquiring any true information regarding the scheme of salvation by Christ. My means of that information were confined, therefore, to strictly Mohammedan books, from which, however, I had learned to admire Him more than Mohammed himself. His self-denying and unselfish character, as depicted even in those books, enchanted me to such a degree that I loved to copy it in my life. It must not be supposed, however, that this circumstance contributed in any degree towards weakening, much less removing, my prejudice against the followers of Christ. On the contrary, it naturally led me to condemn them the more severely. I think I may state it as a well-established fact, that religious change in the Christian sense is simply impossible until the mind is made to feel the want of it—a process which can only be performed by the Holy Ghost. Religious inquiry, strictly so called, may also be considered as properly the result of His direction.

“An event occurred which gradually introduced me into Christian society, and thus gave me an insight into a knowledge of the saving truths as contained in our blessed Gospel. After completing my study of the Koran, and a number of Persian books, I was advised by my grandmother to enter an English school—a thing which was at first objected to by my father on family grounds. At last, however, he gave in. Accordingly, it was arranged that I should attend