

Northern Messenger

VOLUME XXXVI., No. 42

MONTREAL, OCTOBER 18, 1901.

30 Cts. Per An. Post-Paid.

The Value of the Wild Men of India.

(By the Rev. S. A. Perrine, Impur, Naga Hills, Assam, in 'Baptist Missionary Magazine.'

When I first went to Assam I met an intelligent educated Bengali 'babu' (gentleman) who could not understand how I could pass by civilized peoples like the Bengalis and the Assamese and go to preach the gospel to the wild, and to his mind, 'no account' Nagas of the Hills. Since there are many intelligent Americans who are unable to understand this matter allow me to say that the wild or Hill Tribes ought not to be considered less worthy than the apparently 'more desirable' peoples of the Plains; and for the following reasons:

First, All the 'wild men' of India are of splendid stock. They are related to the Chinese, considered the best blood of Asia, and present the most manly and virile missionary ground in the Empire.

Second, The hill man has 'snap' and 'backbone.' These the plains man lacks. In sturdy character the former will almost if not quite outclass his more refined Hindu brother.

Third, The Hill Tribes constitute virgin soil; the plains peoples a soil worn out by the weeds of a dead civilization; and it is a grave question if the so-called civilization of the Plains is not a hindrance rather than a help to the missionary worker. Civilization without God is a very doubtful good. A civilized evil is no better for being civilized.

Fourth, The plains people are weighted down, handicapped by old iron-clad institutions and traditions. For thousands of years these ancient institutions have been tested, and, found wanting, now hang like millstones about the neck of India to sink her to despair. It will require a long time and infinite power to effect a change with such people. The wild man's customs and institutions are easily given up. The difference is that of adamant and clay; the plains people are adamant run into a mould and 'set,' the hill men are clay ready for the potter's hands.

Fifth, The largest and speediest results have been obtained among the wild men. For example, witness the Karens in Burma; the Garos and Nagas in Assam. More than 900 converts were baptized in one year from 'only' one of the wild tribes. Burma and Assam rank among the very best missions in results; and yet in both rank is gained principally by the results among the wild men.

Sixth, In the matter of self-support the plains man is outclassed by his hill brother. It must not be forgotten that the model self-supporting mission of all the world, of any denomination, is among the once wild Karens of Burma. And the other hill Tribes are coming up to the standard set by the Karens.

Seventh, The wild men are increasing, so it is said, more rapidly under and take more kindly to British rule in India than the Plains men. While the educated Hindu is, in some cases, restive under the government of India, the wild men not infrequently come from across the border and beg the English official to take them under his government

and protection, for he knows (what the educated Aryan heathen seems not able to learn) that he cannot govern himself. There is every evidence that the so-called wild men will one day be granted places of honor and influence by the side of the most noble of India.

A few years ago while at Kohima, a government station in the Naga Hills, I was in-



A HEATHEN NAGA.

visited to the 'officers' mess.' During the course of the dinner the colonel turned to me and said, 'Do you believe you are doing any good here among these wild Nagas?' I said, 'Most assuredly or I would not be here.' 'But,' said he, 'you do not mean to tell me that you think these Nagas can actually become converted and become real Christians?' 'Most certainly,' said I, 'as surely Christian



A NAGA CHRISTIAN AND WIFE.

as any one.' 'Bah,' said he, 'they are worthless—no better than dogs; and I would as soon shoot one down as I would a dog.' 'But,' said I, 'you evidently forget that but a few centuries back our Anglo-Saxon forefathers were in much the same condition these Nagas are in. Christianity has made us what we are and will do as much for them, if you will only give the opportunity.' With evident haste he changed the topic of

conversation for he saw the point; and that 'is' the point.

The Lord God Almighty in choosing his people passed by the high grade Latin and cultured Greek and self-conscious Jew and going out into the jungles of Europe chose two wild tribes, the Angles and the Saxons, and cementing them together, gave them the gospel and sent them out into the world to become the mightiest force we have ever known in history.

So again history may repeat itself. God 'may' pass by the wise and noble of India and choosing two of the wild tribes of Central Asia make them the Anglo-Saxons of the Orient. Who can tell?

We are, however, safe in giving, according to the command of Christ, the gospel to all peoples and let them find their own place in the plan of God. We are safe, also, in doing most where there are the largest results—where God manifestly most largely sets his approval. Not less for the plains men but more for the hill men, should be our motto, in my opinion.

Finding the Way of Life.

The Rev. Dr. Howard Agnew Johnston, recently of Chicago, but now pastor of a Presbyterian church in New York city, told in his introductory sermon this incident:

Thirty years ago a business man in Peoria, Ill., met a friend, William Reynolds, also a prominent business man in that city, and said to him: 'Mr. Reynolds, how long have we known each other?'

'About fifteen years.'

'Do you believe that it is necessary for me to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ if I am to be saved?'

'Yes.'

'Do you care whether or not I am saved?'

'Pardon my frankness; I do not want to hurt your feelings, but I do not believe that you care at all whether I am saved or lost.'

'What do you mean?'

'You are a professing Christian, an elder in the Presbyterian church. We have met frequently during the last fifteen years. I have heard you speak on many topics. We have had many conversations. I would have listened gladly to you if you had spoken to me on the subject of religion, and yet in fifteen years you have never said one word about my salvation. You have never tried to win my soul to Christ. I cannot believe that you care whether I am saved or lost.'

Mr. Reynolds with shame confessed that he had neglected his opportunities and then said to his friend: 'What has wrought this change in you?'

'I was in Chicago, yesterday, and when I started to come home a young man asked me if he might share my seat. As soon as the train started, the conversation started by him ran something like this: "Pleasant day?" "Yes." "Good crops this year?" "Yes, pretty good." "We ought to be thankful to the Lord for sending good crops." "Yes, I suppose we should." "My friend, are you a Christian?" "Well, I have a high regard for religion. I think churches are a good thing in a community." "Are you a Christian?" "Well, I cannot say that I am, now that you ask the direct question." "Do you think it