

MISSION FIELD.

An Indian Convert.

The following letter has been sent for publication by Rev. Norman H. Russell. The writer, Mr. N. G. Wellinkar, M.A., LL.D., is a student convert to Christianity. He is a professor in Wilson (Free Church) College, Bombay, and was baptised by Dr. MacKichan recently. He gives his reasons and opinions in a series of letters of which this is first. The baptism of both Mr. Chetty of Madras, and Mr. Wellinkar of Bombay, have attracted considerable attention.

TO MY THOUGHTFUL HINDU FRIENDS.

DEAR FRIENDS,—When one's mind is full, he cannot help opening it to his old friends. My conversion to Christianity has been, what every true conversion is, a complete change of the whole being. The New Man, has supplanted the Old Man, without bringing thoughts many of them too deep for words. The roots of our faith are necessarily hidden from observation, for they lie in that testimony of the Spirit which is silent to all but to him whom it addresses. This is the ultimate ground of our faith—and this is just what cannot be explained. At the same time it is possible to show the chief land marks on the way that has led us to joy and hope. It may be that some will be thus induced to enter upon the search which though accompanied with much groaning, ends, by God's grace, in the discovery of the priceless pearl of Truth. These brief letters are an attempt to show the principle stages by which I have been led in God's mercy to my present belief.

Do we or do we not need a religion? Not the simple name of religion but a living religion which shall enter every thought, every word, every act; in a word a power that shall guide us along the difficult way of life. To-day let us briefly consider this question. I shall content myself with urging a single consideration, in this letter. Every educated Hindu, however sceptical, admits that he needs the name of religion. He thinks that it is necessary for him, and it is his right, to be considered "A Hindu" not only in the sense of a Hindu by nationality, but a Hindu by religion. Whatever may be his views and doubts regarding Hinduism, he feels, he needs the name of it. But what is a name without the reality corresponding to it? What is then the reality which this name of Hinduism represents for those educated men who delight to call themselves Hindus? In other words is Hinduism in any sense a real, living, sustaining religion to them? I think an honest inquirer can only have one answer to this question, viz.—*It is not.* A religion is something which is fully believed in as eternal and unassailable truth. Dear friends, ask yourselves the question, how many of you believe in Hinduism; or leaving belief alone for a moment, tell me whether you can make to your own consciences, an honest answer to the question—"What is Hinduism?"

Do not deceive yourselves by drawing distinctions between "Popular" and "Philosophical" Hinduism. Such a distinction is in itself a confession of weakness and doubt, for there cannot be a popular and another philosophical religion, a religion for the masses and another for the classes. There is no such thing as "Popular Christianity." God's Truth is one for all men. Any special meeting the educated classes may put into Hinduism cannot have to them the authority of religion—what they have invented for their belief they may quite easily disbelieve. Men's imaginings cannot have the convincing power of anything which purports to bear the seal and superscription of the Most High. Which are the inspired books of the Hindus, which is the law for their faith, what is their Canon? Some say the Vedas are inspired and are the sole law of the faith of the Hindus.—Many very competent men deny this; and how many educated Hindus have made a study of the Vedas, or can give a consistent account of their teaching? Can the Vedas then be for Hindus their own book, the guide and solace of their daily lives? Can they possibly occupy for them, the place which the Bible occupies in Christian life throughout the world? Men want something authoritative. Something definite and positive as the basis of their faith. If these remarks are true, (and I am convinced that no honest inquirer will dispute their truth), it follows that Hinduism has no authoritative scriptures and being without these cannot claim that belief which is of the essence of religion. I omitted to refer to a recent invention of some of my educated Hindu friends that the Bhagvatgita is the inspired book of the Hindus. This is a new claim for it, and as it is not generally set up, I need not consider it.

Indeed Hindus show by their conduct, in different ways, that they have no faith in Hinduism, whether "popular" or "philosophical"—but this aspect of the question, I shall consider in my next letter.

N. G. WELLINKAR.

Barrie Presbyterian Society.

Following is an extended report of the eight annual meeting of the Barrie Presbyterian Society held in Orillia, a brief notice of which has already appeared. The President, Mrs. R. N. Grant of Orillia presiding, and all the officers were present except Mrs. Moodie, 1st Vice-President; and Mrs. Tillson, Secretary of Supplies.

The first session opened at 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday with a short devotional service, in which a number of the ladies took part. The opening exercises were conducted by the president and Mrs. Clark of Bracebridge. Mrs. Carwell of Bond Head gave the opening address. The Committee on Credentials, through Miss Pepper of Orillia, reported eighty-two delegates in attendance.

The reading and adoption of the minutes was followed by the President's address, which was a very able and thoughtful resume of the work done during the year. Very encouraging reports were read from the several Auxiliaries and Mission Bands in the Presbytery of Barrie. Mrs. Barker of the Methodist Woman's Missionary Society, and Miss Stewart of St. James Woman's Auxiliary, presented greetings from their societies.

The address of welcome, delivered by Miss Christie of Orillia was much appreciated by all present. Mrs. Smith of Bradford, on behalf of the society made a very suitable reply.

The reports of the Presbyterial Society, read by Mrs. Needham, Secretary, and Mrs. Stevenson, Treasurer, were received with great interest and found to be very encouraging, showing greater zeal and a more earnest effort on the part of the Auxiliaries and Bands than ever before. The following is an extract from the Secretary's report:—

"In looking at our work from all points of view, your Secretary rejoices to report not one faint-hearted Auxiliary or Mission Band on record this year. Of the forty branches comprising our Society, eight have been organized this year, four Auxiliaries and four Bands, viz.—Auxiliaries at North Bay, Penetanguishene, Guthrie Church, Oro.; and Central Church, Mitchell Square, and Bands at Duntroon, Guthrie, Tottenham and Central Church. Our President has sought to impress these newly organized branches with the importance of the work, and that on woman alone lies the condemnation for its non-fulfilment. Apart from organization; no presbyterial visitation was deemed necessary during the year.

"Twenty-one Auxiliaries, numbering 364 members, and 75 members of the General Society, nineteen Mission Bands with a membership of 385 and 20 members of General Society, give a total membership of 949 and 95 members of General Society as against last years figures of 767 and 92. Our average attendance reaching even to 446. All the societies, except two, report general members. One Auxiliary records a life member. Our contributions this year mark signal progress. The total revenue received being \$1,262.67, of which \$367.08 was raised by the Mission Bands showing them to be really interested workers. The envelope system is used in all the branches except two and is the system by which the noblest results in giving can be obtained. Our Presbyterial Fund has met with a liberal response, only eight branches having failed to remit, \$94 was forwarded to our Treasurer. The establishing of an Expense Fund in fully one-half of the branches has no doubt helped to maintain the former in a vigorous condition.

"The Thank-offering service has now become an established feature of our Society, and the excellent results following, financially and spiritually, are too far-reaching to be fully estimated. The impressions made at the present meetings often tend to increase the membership, fuller consecration and to show us more clearly our duty.

"Passing on to the supplies for the North-west, we notice that although the requirements, as laid down by the Board of our Presbytery have not been so large as formerly, nine good substantial bales have been sent from our quarter, a goodly part of the material being new. As to the November Leaflet, confirms us of its appreciation in the Portage la Prairie school, valued altogether at \$342.24. Twenty four Auxiliaries and Mission Bands contributed supplies for the box. The same evidences of progress noted in the foregoing are also seen in our monthly Letter Leaflet; 470 copies are this year in circulation as against 353 formerly, 80 copies having been subscribed for by the Y. W. Bands. Says our Secretary 'As the only organ of our society, we supply every lady in the congregation with a copy.' Five hundred annual reports have been distributed throughout the Presbytery."

A very full and complete report from the Secretary of Supplies was read by Mrs. McCrae, of Collingwood, in the unavoidable absence of the Secretary, Mrs. Tillson. An interesting and instructive paper on "our failures, or the greatest lack in our work," was read by Mrs. Johnson, of Penetanguishene. Mrs. Watt, of Geolph delighted the audience with a very able address to workers. Mrs. Watt was listened to with great attention and many of the members received help and encouragement from her earnest words.

A resolution of condolence, expressing the sorrow of the Society was sent to Mrs. Tillson, Secretary of Supplies, who has recently passed through deep affliction in the death of her little girl.

The public meeting in the evening was largely attended, A. H. Beaton, M.D., presiding. The address of the Rev. Jonathan Goforth on China was thoroughly appreciated by all present. During the evening the choir of the church rendered some very excellent anthems. A collection in aid of the Presbyterial Fund was taken up, amounting to \$45.

At the morning session on Wednesday the following officers were elected:—President, Mrs. R. N. Grant, Orillia; Vice-Presidents, Mrs. Moodie, Barrie, Mrs. Clark, Bracebridge, Mrs. McCrae, Collingwood, Mrs. McLeod, Barrie; Secretary, Mrs. Needham, Orillia; Assistant Secretary, Miss Robertson, Collingwood; Secretary of Supplies, Mrs. Bailey, Gravenhurst; Treasurer, Mrs. Stevenson, Barrie. A invitation from the Collingwood Auxiliaries and Mission Bands to hold the next annual meeting in that town, was cordially accepted. Mrs. Moodie of Barrie was elected Presbyterial Delegate to the Society General Meeting in Toronto.

Miss McIntyre of Collingwood read a very well prepared paper on "Importance of Touch between our Auxiliaries and Mission Bands." The meetings closed with the Wednesday afternoon session. By a unanimous vote, a Life Membership Certificate was presented to Mrs. Moodie of Barrie. Mrs. Hunter of Orillia sang several selections during the meetings, and Miss Chase presided at the organ. The thanks of the Society are extended to both these ladies.—R. L. ROBERTSON, Asst. Sec.