

II.—INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT.

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The Power of the Gospel from Personal Observation in India.

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A young Braman, a Bachelor of Arts of Madras University, once spoke of our mission work as follows: "Sir, I perceive that in your successful mission work you devote your energy to the outcastes rather than in striving to win the higher castes through establishing missions schools, and colleges. In this you imitate your Divine Master. When He founded His religion He did not begin with the proud and haughty Pharisee, filled with prejudices so deep seated as to be impossible of eradication; but He chose the simple, unlettered fishermen of Galilee, and on their unsophisticated minds He stamped His message for all mankind. He wrote on blanks, that the word might be clear and legible to all. So in this land you have practically passed over us Pharisaic Bramans, filled with our preconceived notions of religion, our own systems of philosophy and conceits in learning, and have delivered your message to the unlearned and unprejudiced outcastes. They will hand it on to others, without bias, and will be found much safer mediums for its preservation and transmission than any higher caste. You also illustrate the great natural law that, if one wishes to lift all the books in a pile, one must lift the lowest. So, sir, if you convert the outcastes, if you are successful in elevating them, all other higher castes up to the Bramans must come up with them."

The earliest Protestant missionaries to South India were successful among caste people, gathering in large numbers, and with them the deep-seated prejudices and customs that a more or less superficial knowledge of the saving power of Christ scarcely altered, much less eradicated. No church could exist

in Christ with an element of decay so un-Christlike as the caste system. Therefore, these largely passed away. But the impression left by those early nominal successes in the eighteenth century determined the whole bent of missionary effort and ambition in India for some time in the succeeding century, and decided the policy as that of the educational method which strives to affect the mind of the subtle and metaphysical Braman and other higher castes, rather than the evangelistic method which strives after all alike. But the great revival that swept over the Ongole field in 1878 and the magnificent successes in that mission changed the entire missionary policy of India. This prominently emphasized the Divine order, which seems to be to reach the rich and noble through the despised and rejected. Dr. Gordon very aptly expressed the reason for this order of working as follows: "The most virile and uncorrupted manhood is often found among the wild and outcaste tribes of heathen. Once subdued by the Gospel, they in turn become subduers, aggressive and irrepressible evangelists. Therefore the directest way for the Gospel to reach upward is for it to strike downward."

This truth is illustrated forcibly by Lakshmaya, the converted grasscutter, a poor, despised outcaste, sometimes asleep, sometimes awake, always drunk. His daily home-coming was generally followed by beating his wife, driving her and the terrified children from the house, smashing the pots and simple furniture, and then falling on the mat floor of his little hut or into the filth of the yard, and there sleeping like a beggar. The Gospel message reached his dull ear, and the energizing power of the love of Christ touched his drink-sodden heart. Lakshmaya was converted. He rose early, cut grass all morning—as much as he could formerly cut in a whole day—sold it at noon to the vil-