

grumbling at the native christians, but to stir them up to endeavour to get heathenism, if possible, out of the way; and it is a peculiar excellence of this remedy, that the medicine does good to the dispenser as well as to the receiver. Whenever, therefore, I am informed by the native teacher, or the head men of a village, of the existence in a congregation of carelessness, quarrelsomeness, conformity with heathen customs, or any similar evils, I answer by endeavouring to set them all a-working to bring over their heathen neighbours to christianity. If they can only be induced to exert themselves for the good of their neighbours, particularly if in doing so they obtain some little success, most of the evils that are complained of get rectified of themselves. I constantly tell them, and am able to prove to them by many local illustrations, that so long as accessions from heathenism go on, waverers stand firm, and that as soon as accessions cease, disorder commences and waverers begin to drop away. Nothing does a congregation so much good as the infusion of a little new blood, and as the meaning of new blood being infused is that new minds and hearts have been brought under the influence of the truth, we have a double reason for recommending this remedy.

I have now to give some account of the inroads upon heathenism which we have been endeavouring to make during the year.

I find that the accessions amount to 313 souls. From this number, however, I must deduct losses from emigration and other causes, including the falling away of a remote little hamlet, comprising 19 souls, which had been received a few months before I arrived, on probation.

These losses amount to 78 in all, so that the total clear increase during the year is reduced to 235. The number of souls actually added to the christian community is always an unsafe criterion of the amount of labour that has been expended, and of good that has been done. In the instances before us this is particularly evident, for though the total number of accessions from heathenism is but small, the number of villages in which they have taken place is no less than 21, each of which has had its own history of labours and plans, anxieties and hopes.

I stated in a previous communication that a native Society for the Propagation of Gospel was established in August last, for the especial purpose of spreading the Gospel in the western part of the district. About the time when the Society was established, and the minds of the people were full of this new idea, we began to receive accessions from heathenism in the eastern part of the district, in various villages in which congregations had already been established.

There cannot be any doubt that the progress that has been made even in the eastern villages is partly owing to the establishment of this Society.

It appears to be owing also in a considerable degree to the prominence which I have given to this department of work in all my intercourse with the catechists and schoolmasters, and especially at their weekly meeting. On these occasions I ask each person in succession to state what he has done during the week for the conversion of the heathens around him, especially of the heathens in the village in which he is located, what books or tracts he has given them or read to them, and what appears to be the result. I have occasionally to suggest to them more accurate or safer answers to heathen objections than those which they had made use of, and to give them information about matters in which they are found to be deficient. Occasionally also I propose to them questions pertaining to the controversy with Hinduism, to which they are to

bring me written answers the following week. We always close this part of the business of the day, before proceeding to any thing else, with special prayer for the conversion of the heathen, and the establishment of the kingdom of God. In consequence of all this, most of the native teachers and schoolmasters are now evidently taking a more lively interest in the propagation of the Gospel, and are learning to engage in this work in a manner more likely to do good. They are naturally fonder of ridicule than of serious argument, fonder of attacking the characters of the Hindoo gods, which are certainly very tempting objects of attack, than of bringing the claims of truth and duty to bear upon the consciences of their hearers. Like all Hindoos they make much use of illustrations, and sometimes turn off the edge of an opponent's illustration with admirable readiness and skill. Some time ago a heathen said to one of our catechists, 'Here is your Padre sending out people in every direction to invite us to come to him, but nobody comes, whereas Subrahmanya\* sits quietly in his temple at Trichen-door, and all the country flocks to his festival!' 'Yes,' said the catechist, 'if a man wants to sell milk, he has to put a pot of milk on his head, and go about crying "milk!" "milk!" all through the village, but if he sets up a toddy shop, all the riff-raff of the neighbourhood will flock to him without invitation.'

In my own periodical visits to each of the villages in the district, I have made it my principal object to seek out, converse with, and gather in the heathen, and this also has not been without effect. As I have already explained, the villages under my care are to be regarded, not as christian villages containing still a few stray heathens, but as heathen villages with small communities of christians. A day spent in one of those villages furnishes me, therefore, with many excellent opportunities of speaking to heathens. Many of them come about me of their own accord; others will come when I send for them, during the heat of the day, or may be seen in places of public concourse in the cool of the evening.

In this respect, at least, the assertion of the heathen mentioned above that 'nobody comes' is not correct. The only exception is that when some persons whom I have frequently spoken to without effect are invited to come and see me again, they will say, 'No, we cannot go; we have promised him so often to become christians without keeping our promise, that we must now keep out of the way.' This has taught me the expediency of allowing people sometimes to leave me without being brought to a point, and of being content with producing a vaguely favourable impression, in the hope of getting an opportunity of renewing the conversation at some future time.

Part of my time when I visit a village is spent in conducting Divine Service with the christians, examining their lessons, and inquiring into their conduct. A still larger portion of time is spent in conversations with the heathen, and this part of my work is an unfailling source of interest and pleasure. We are appointed to be 'fishers of men,' and never do I feel happier than when going out into the village for a few days fishing. My fishing in these parts is not at present on a large scale. It has not been my lot to fish with a drag net, and to catch a net full of great fishes—an hundred and fifty and three—in a single cast. I have been obliged to content myself with angling for isolated fish in quiet corners of the lake. What varied interest and excitement there is in the spiritual fishing!—were it not that I fear to make a sacred comparison walk on all fours, I could tell how often I am tantalized with 'nibbles,' how

excited I feel when I get a 'bite,' how I exult when a fish is safely landed, and how sometimes when an innocent perch is quietly nibbling at my bait, a great old pike, the persecutor of his neighbourhood, makes a rush at him and swallows him up. Though my fishing is on a small scale, the proportion of the fish I catch that seem fit only to be cast away is as large, I fear, as if I caught thousands at a time. I rarely indeed cast any away, for the proper time for doing so is yet to come, but I notice now and again, on scrutinizing what I have caught, certain unwholesome-looking fish, or slippery, slimy creatures, half fish, half snake, which are not likely to fare well when the angels sit down on the eternal shore and separate the good from the bad. Not unfrequently, indeed, fish of that sort do not wait to be rejected, but find their own way into the water as fast as they come out of it.

In one case this year, and that too in a village where some very promising converts have joined us, a set of people came over from faction rather than faith, remained with us only about a couple of months, and then relapsed into heathenism. I felt very doubtful from the first of the propriety of having any thing to do with them, but I allowed them to join the congregation probationally, in the hope that some well-disposed persons might be discovered amongst them in time. Before long they wanted to seize and pull down the principal heathen temple of the village, though the majority of the inhabitants were still heathens, then they wanted to prevent their heathen neighbours from performing their usual monthly sacrifices; and lastly, when they found that I would not yield to any of their views, they petitioned the authorities to drive a street through their enemies' houses. I had hard work to keep the peace between them and their neighbours, and to prevent the heathens from making reprisals, for they were twice irritated into making a combination to prohibit christians from buying or selling. At length, however, after complaining that I loved heathens better than christians, the majority of these unpromising converts went back in disgust. In cases like this, or more or less resembling this, a few of which occur now and then, I am sorry to say that even the better sort of native christians and native catechists rarely seem to approve of impartial justice. Honesty and justice are admitted to be the best policy in general, but there are exceptional cases, and it always seems to be an exceptional case when the interests of the family, the caste, or the Church are supposed to be involved. The peaceful policy I endeavour to pursue seems to the people tame and spiritless at the time, but after all excitement is over it generally commends itself to their better judgment.

The best vindication of the propriety of it is the peace which the district enjoys, and the peaceful progress which the Gospel makes.

It is a peculiarly hopeful feature of the accessions from heathenism which have taken place during the year, that a considerable proportion of the converts have been induced to take this step, not by that mixture of motives which is so commonly observed in these parts, but by a conviction of the truth of christianity wrought in them by reading of the Scriptures and other christian books, or by conversations with christians.

In the village of Poothirupoovaly a respectably connected young man, called Sudalai-maden, was recently induced to join the congregation by the reading of christian books. His parents and other relatives still remain in heathenism, and are strongly opposed to the step he has taken. He has shown the strength of his convictions and his freedom from secular motives by daring to stand alone.

\* The principal deity worshipped in Tinnevely.