

Sudras, in the same way that there is a large class of half-castes in the Southern States of America, and a class of the same here, resulting from the union between Europeans and Hindus. Room had to be made in the body, social and economic, for these. So certain trades were assigned to them, and they formed very low castes. Gradually the larger castes became broken up into sections. Each trade became a caste by itself, in which the individual was born, and had to live and die. Easily we can conceive some of the effects of such a system. Each man's loyalty went forth to his caste, but he had none for his sovereign or his country. He would die for his caste, but he would not stir a step to repel a foreign invader. He had nothing to do with that work: that belonged to the Kshatriyas, and they were never very numerous, and soon thinned in numbers, for the licence of a military life is unfavourable to increase. But at the present day the lines are getting rapidly wiped out. Brahmans, Vaisyas, and Sudras sit together and rub shoulders in our Missionary class rooms, though fifty years ago a Brahman would have endured untold torture rather than submit to the degradation, and the Sudra would have been proud literally to lick the dust off the Brahman's foot, or place his head on the ground to serve as a stepping-stone for the favourite of Brahma.

But not without a struggle did the Brahmans succeed in establishing their system and supremacy. It was just the same battle that long afterwards was fought out in Europe between a usurping priesthood and the free consciences of men,—and the difference lies in this, that in India the protest was godless and unsuccessful, whilst in Europe it consisted of an appeal to the God of Truth, and was blessed by Him. I allude, of course, to Buddhism. Perhaps we might designate it with truth as a political, quite as much as a religious, movement. Priesthood, the hierarchical spirit, is destructive of *all* liberty, and degrades its victims to serfdom in all respects. So, Buddhism has various aspects. Viewed from one side, it may be said to be an effort to throw off the yoke political that the Brahmans had put upon the people's neck. Though this does not appear to have been the aim of Buddha himself, yet there is no doubt that the great success of the movement was owing to its strongly democratic character. It protested against all monopolies, either in matters religious or secular, and proclaimed the doctrine of the freedom and equality of all men. In another aspect it is seen as strongly religious. It aimed at a reformation of morals and manners, and for this end promulgated a moral code by very many degrees in advance of Brahmanism; it struck down priestly pretension by utterly repudiating caste; it denied all mystery, and enunciated the supremacy of reason in all matters. Indeed, it is in this latter aspect, as a manifestation and development of thorough-paced Rationalism, that Buddhism is specially interesting to us. It swept away the possibility of the supernatural at one sweep; it predicated the impossibility of the miraculous; it proclaimed, in the broadest terms, that Reason and Reason alone was to decide belief; that all we could not understand was to be disbelieved, and that we were to believe nothing save what in its innermost secrets could be penetrated by Reason. Had Hume and Comte only been familiar with this old Rationalism of India, they would have found out that the palm of originality could no longer be given to them, but that their peculiar principles had been promulgated with equal subtlety, and fifty times the earnestness and self-denial, by Indian sages, considerably more than 2000 years before they were born. We are quite prepared to find that the Buddhists were not, as it may safely be said no man can be, true to these principles. They were professedly hard and pure materialists, claiming to possess no other vision save that which is bounded by the visible. Yet, practically, they transgressed this fundamental position at the outset of their speculations. They passed not into the Unseen, yet their hopes and aspirations pointed to a rest from the cycle of transmigrations by an absorption into the Divine essence. They had a heaven to look forward to, but it was a heaven where individuality