

"THE NEED OF

A

WELL-TRAINED NATIVE AGENCY,"

BY

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THE NEED OF A WELL-TRAINED NATIVE AGENCY.

BY THE REV W JOSS BANGALORE.



MISSIONARIES of all societies feel the need of such men and the time has come for us to consider the question "How are we to get them?" Some societies have already held their centenary. One hundred years have passed away since the Church began to send the gospel to the heathen. During that time many doors of usefulness have been thrown open to the agents of all societies, many lessons have also been learned and we who have entered upon the second century of missionary work, are thankful that the doors are more and wider than ever and we are as thankful for the experience gained in the past. This is a heritage that should not be despised. It has been gained at a great cost of men and money of deep thought and much suffering, of many prayers and great self-sacrifice. Many experiments have been tried and definite satisfactory results have been obtained. These results should be our starting points for the future. We have been taught what we should do if we hope to carry on our work to a successful issue, it is our duty to profit by the instruction given. Dangerous rocks and shoals have been marked out. It is not necessary that we should again prove them exist once by recklessly incurring fresh disasters. Two lessons have been thoroughly learned by all, viz, that 'the gospel is the power of God unto salvation' in India as well as at home, and that native agency is a necessity. But it is not certain that there is as universal well-grounded a knowledge and belief in any other of the many lessons taught by the past. I say "universal," for we have here to think of the knowledge and opinions of those that at home criticise and direct our actions here.

The gospel must be made known. native agents must be employed to be its heralds. upon these two points all are agreed, but when we consider the quality of the agents to be employed, it is not certain that unanimity of opinion continues to exist. Theoretically we may approach one another in opinion, practically we diverge very considerably. Thus

righteousness needs continual supplies of the gentleness and strength of Christ.

The difficulties that have to be overcome are great but there are now more encouragements than there used to be. Through the teaching of the Scriptures in mission schools and *zananas* and through the distribution of religious books and tracts as well as by the direct teaching of the truth, a knowledge of the word of God has been disseminated through many parts of the country, but owing to the unequal distribution of labourers, it has been made better known in some parts of the country, and even in some parts of the same district, than in others. So that while in some places many are familiar with the truth, in others it is little known. We have then inequalities in social position and advantages, in natural ability and educational attainments and in the nature and depth of religious knowledge. These are, and will yet become still more, important factors to be taken into account, for till our native agents are so numerous that men can be set apart for special kinds of work, the efficient evangelist will be the man that can adapt himself to the different sets of circumstances in which daily, he finds himself placed and who at the same time draws from the fountain of Divine supply "grace for grace according to his daily need" that he may not be overcome or rendered indifferent and careless by the morbid caste, the callousness of sensibility or their moral obtruseness; for then idolatrous practices, their superstitious beliefs their immorality, and their profound ignorance of the true nature of God, of sin, and of their duty to themselves and others, form a triple coat around their consciences that prevents the entrance of the truth of God into their hearts. Progress has been made in impressing men and leading them to the "knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus" but much very much, has yet to be done before India is won for Christ. To bring all men to His feet we need in every part of the field the wise men that can win souls, the "workmen that need not to be ashamed."

THE WORK TO BE DONE.

Expressed in a phrase it is to make known the gospel of salvation. This expression is very simple in structure, but it describes a work full of details, it is easily said, but the work is very difficult to perform aright.

The evangelist has first to preach the gospel to the *heathen*. He has to make it known to them just as they are, just as he meets them in the streets or in their houses. To Muhammadans and Hindus of every caste and religious sect, educated or not he has to speak of sin and a

Saviour, and to do it in a way that will attract and not repel. This teaching must therefore be adapted to the knowledge and capacity of his hearers.

• The acute-minded Brahman whose studies and knowledge entitle him to a place among the disciples of a Hindu school of religious thought, is in a different mental state for hearing the truth from the Pariah, whose thoughts seldom rise above the routine of daily life. The man whose mind receives fresh ideas and stimulus from the monthly journals that come from Europe and America must have the truth presented to him in a different way from the man whose thoughts are limited to the range of his vernacular studies. These distinctions are marked but there are others quite as definite. The mass of those round us have their moral natures and their religious sensibilities protected against the truth of Christ by the hard crust of conventional ideas produced by traditional teaching and by the services of the temple and the mosque. As the Christian advocate tries to reach the heart, he finds arrayed against him as protective barriers the doctrines of fate, of transmigration, of the use of sacred ashes &c., and no progress towards the inner citadel can be made till these are removed. Then there are some who are dissatisfied with the religious practices of their forefathers and neighbours, and who are in a state of unrest. This may have been produced by occasional glimpses of the realms of truth lying beyond the sphere of established beliefs, or it may have been brought about by earnest thought about the present and the future, or it has been brought about by the religious instruction received in mission schools or from Christian publications. Such men have been seized upon by some truth and they can find no rest till they yield to it. They cannot believe what their forefathers believed and yet they can give no satisfactory reason for their disbelief. They are wrestling with they know not what. When the evangelist meets with such, he has to be an interpreter of thoughts in the man, he has to be in sympathy with the onward movement of religious thought and feeling, he has to place himself in contact with their inner religious life that he may so present the truth that the intellectual, moral and religious faculties of those he speaks to may feel that it is from God and claims their allegiance. Then there are many whose condition is such that life affords them no pleasure, and they have no prospect of a better state of things. To them the gospel of hope, of rest, of joy has to be taught slowly, patiently, lovingly. Thus to all classes it must be made known as they need it and can receive it, otherwise it will fail of its purpose.

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power of receiving it, and impressions are made on their minds and hearts that are not effaced in later years, but bear witness to the presence of God with them. It is of the utmost importance to the work of God in India that the work done in these schools should be done in the best possible manner, and the evangelist in his visits can do much to stimulate the teachers and promote the welfare of the school. He can do both by interesting the people in the work done, by examining the classes in Scripture and perhaps also in other subjects by gently removing any friction that may exist, and by inspiring the Christian teachers especially with fresh zeal from his own example and energy. The Christian teacher has often to work far from sustaining Christian influences and exposed to temptations and trials that are hard to endure and he needs all the help that a mind and heart stored with knowledge and experience and animated by the Spirit of God can impart to him. We need not dwell any longer upon this part of our subject, but before we go on to the next there must be mentioned another important department for which well-educated men are wanted and that is to become teachers in middle class schools and high class schools and colleges.

The teaching of God's truth to children and young men and women is regarded in all Christian countries as of primary importance. The Sunday school and the weekly Bible class are now necessities to church life, and the problem that has long been presented for solution in annual ministerial assemblies is 'How can we retain our older scholars?' All interested in the welfare of men desire to see the youth of the nation attending classes for advanced instruction in divine truth so for years past this question has been asked and no answer universally practicable has yet been given. In this country we do not need to ask any such question, for we can get under religious instruction not only children of six or seven years of age but young men between the ages of 16 and 22, and that not only once a week but on five or six days a week. Perhaps there is some mysterious virtue that attends the teaching of a Scripture lesson for half an hour on a Sunday that cannot possibly attend it when taught for an hour on a Monday or a Wednesday; or perhaps Scripture truth is more efficacious when taught once a week than when taught five or six times a week. It may be so and many of our friends at home seem to think that it is so, but personally I have not been able to discover it. To my un-mystical mind the teaching of God's truth for five or six hours a week for twelve or fourteen years consecutively under good teachers is likely to be more instrumental in extending God's kingdom here than teaching it once a week for about half an-

hour for five or six years. In our mission schools and colleges we have lads from six years of age to ages ranging between 18 and 22, under daily, systematic Bible instruction, but one thing is still needed *viz.*, men competent to teach the Scripture lesson properly in each class.

The Christian teacher must be able to explain correctly the portion read, and the lessons learned should be earnestly and wisely enforced. But before he can teach others he must himself be taught, he must have been trained in the correct method of studying the Scriptures, have been inspired with a love for them and a sense of their importance and sublimity and thus be led to prepare his Scripture lesson even more carefully than any other he has to teach. There has long been a prevalent opinion that any young man or woman who is a member of a church and has passed any of the examinations required by the educational department is competent to teach the Scriptures to any class. This is a radical mistake. A Travancore missionary, who gave a great deal of attention to the establishment of schools, used to say that a tour around his schools had upon him the same effect as putting a mustard plaster upon a raw place. The most painful experience I have had in school work has been felt when listening to native pastors teaching a Scripture lesson. This ought not to be. The classes of our schools and colleges offer one of the most promising fields for evangelistic work that one can desire, and they would be really the most fruitful if every class had a properly trained Christian teacher, *i.e.*, a teacher trained to teach Christian truth. The churches should see to it that adequate provision is made to give this training. Missionary educational work has been often most severely and most unintelligently criticised and no part of it has been so much condemned as the scarcity of Christian teachers, but our critics have never asked the question—Can a sufficient number of efficient Christian teachers be got? Have arrangements been made for training them to be trustworthy teachers of the Scriptures? If not what must be done? The churches should arouse themselves and ask questions like these, and their policy should be directed by the answers given. The Government, fully alive to the wants of the country in its upward progressive course, have been raising the standard of the qualification of teachers till none but highly educated and normally trained men need apply for a vacancy in a school. But nothing has been done to provide in the same way for the better Christian instruction of our pupils. The Scriptures are the most important lesson taught in our schools, and it should be seen to that they are perfectly taught.

the most fastidious will not be offended. He should be familiar with the ordinary vernacular classics and religious works, and he should be able in dealing with a quotation, to give the special meaning of the more difficult words and the sense of the whole stanza. And such quotations are often useful to illustrate a Christian truth or to answer an objection raised, for although among scholars a statement taken from a vernacular work carries little weight with it, yet to a promiscuous audience a suitable stanza from a respected poet, when explained, has a decided influence with many, and if a quotation is met by another from the same author or one of equal authority the interest of all in the discussion will be increased and a more favourable reception will be given to what has been said or may afterwards be said. But this command of vernacular grammar and vocables and this knowledge of literature are not speedily gained even by the natives. Years of close patient study must be given to them before they can be so mastered that they will be always ready for use. Along with this knowledge of the vernacular a good command of English is a necessity, for it is only by its means that an evangelist can make use of the only theological works that will be of assistance to him in his work. Commentaries and other works on biblical subjects and Christian dogmatics, as well as useful books in general literature, are available only in the English language, and it is only through its use that he can continue his studies and keep himself fully equipped for the many demands of the work he has to do. Now this knowledge of the vernacular and English, as well as the elements of general knowledge requisite to fit an evangelist for his work, can be got only in the classes of a well-equipped college. The Matriculation standard is not sufficient. What is needed is such a mastery of these languages that they can be readily used, and this can be attained only by such a course of study and under such teachers as a college supplies. The work to be done calls for men who with other qualifications have succeeded in passing the University F. A. and B. A. examinations. It cannot be persistently and successfully carried on with men of lower attainments. The uneducated or partially educated man who has felt the saving power of Christ may be able to tell others of what God has done for him, and do it in such a way as to awaken their interest, and he may even lead some to Christ, but to do all the work of an evangelist as it should be done for twenty or thirty years in the face of constant opposition requires men of proved ability and of high culture as well as of Christian character.

HOW ARE SUITABLE MEN TO BE OBTAINED?

Poets are born not made,' and every man that is a member of the Christian church is not a "born preacher." Yet, although few possess all the gifts of a successful evangelist it is our duty to remove any obstacles that prevent suitable men offering themselves for the service of God in this capacity, and such obstacles do exist. They are chiefly of a pecuniary character, for they are (1) dissatisfaction with the monthly pay offered and with (2) no prospect of a pension. There are two other matters which put right will also assist us in getting the right class of men. These will be mentioned in due course. This whole question must be looked at and treated in a business manner. There is hard, important work to be done in an intelligent and systematic manner. It will not be completed in our lifetime nor in that of the generation following, and from now till its completion whenever that may be, there will be an ever growing demand for the exercise of ability and zeal of the wise workman. The work to be done needs those that can persistently put forth well directed energies, and it is for the church to see that these are got, and when employed that they are properly supported while they are faithful in the discharge of their duties. Questions about the existence or absence of the spirit of self-sacrifice must not intrude themselves here to push aside the principle of equity. What the church has now to consider is not, What is the highest possible principle that should influence a young man in offering himself for mission work? but it is this, What is it that has hitherto deprived missionary societies of the services of the best young men in our churches? This is the question we have to deal with, and the answer when found should be the starting point of a new policy for the future. This answer then has been given. They have not offered themselves because they have been dissatisfied with, among other things, the financial prospect set before them, the details of which are

1. A monthly stipend that never rises above a mere competency, and is sometimes below it,

2. No prospect of an increase of salary but an almost certain one of a decrease, if not of actual dismissal whenever a deficiency occurs in the funds of the Society;

3. No hope of a pension when rendered unfit for work by long service;

Whereas the Government holds out to them—

1. A higher rate of pay to begin with,

2. A certain increase on promotion ;
3. A guaranteed pension after a fixed number of years ;
4. The work is generally easier and the social advantages much greater

These considerations and methods of looking at Christian work in the future will be considered by some to be "mercenary" and "unspiritual." They ought rather to be looked at as based on common sense and Christ's express teaching "The hire of the labourer" of all kinds has a very definite place in God's legislative enactments, and therefore it is a subject that lies near to the heart of Christ, and we can study it aright only when sitting at His feet. The first thing to be settled is that each evangelist should be certain of getting monthly a suitable rate of pay on a graduated increasing scale.

Details are here out of place. The relation between income and expenditure varies so much with locality that each Society must draw up its own scale and the application of it may vary in the same local Committee. All that can be done here is to suggest the lines on which a scale should be drawn up.

It is here suggested that

1. The rate of pay should differ with qualifications. A graduate should be better paid than one who is not.

2. A married man should get more than a single man of his grade.

3. The minimum pay should not be very high, yet, with due economy, it should be sufficient to meet all necessary wants, so that he can do his work without anxiety.

4. The rate of pay should be subject to a periodical increase to graduates say of Rs. 10 and to others of Rs. 5 *per mensem*. The first increase to be paid at the end of three years, and the others at the end of every five years until graduates get a maximum of Rs. 100 *per mensem* and others Rs. 50 or 60 *per mensem*. The maximum would be reached after about 25 years service. There should be a certain prospect of a pension. The best worker must at last confess that he can work no longer. Strength, however great, will yield to infirmities. The desire to work, however intense, must at some time remain unsatisfied. Each worker must yield his place to another and be laid aside unfit for further active labour. But when old age, or physical inability, brings to an end a long period of useful work, the agent should be generously dealt with. Justice makes this claim upon the Church just as it does upon the Government, and makes it all the more urgently that through the years

spent in active service its agents have been receiving monthly a bare competency. It has not been in his power to save much. If he has honestly paid his way, he has done all that could be expected of him, and he has in doing so set a useful example of self-denial and economy to the rest of his countrymen. If he gets paid on a graduated increasing scale an increasing expenditure has to be met. The periodical rise in the cost of living that seems to be a necessary condition of things owing to occasional famines, &c. and the cost of education which is greater with each periodical elevation in the scale of fees, are likely to keep pace with the increase of salary, so that even if the pay now given is improved it cannot be expected that our agents can save any considerable sum—nothing at all adequate to take the place of a pension. Therefore those he has faithfully served should see to it that when he can no longer work he is still provided for. By that time his daily expenditure will be less than it was as his children will have been provided for, and so a moiety of his pay will be sufficient to keep him comfortable.

These are the two chief things to be attended to but they are not all. The experience of the past has taught us that there are others. In addition to this it should be the case that each well-trained agent should stand in a definite and close relation to the Committee as well as to the missionary whom he is assisting.

As candidates for mission work they should be examined by the Committee before they enter upon their theological course, during their period of study their character and then progress in study should be under the supervision of the Committee; if at the termination of their studies they satisfy the Committee of their fitness for work, each student that is approved of should get a certificate from the Committee expressing this approval and sanctioning him to be employed as an evangelist; and during the time they are in active service they should be under the Committee and not only under the individual missionary. Every agent should also have a certainty of employment during good conduct and faithful service.

He should feel that so long as he does his work conscientiously, he will not be liable to be dismissed. The Church should determine that the men employed shall be maintained and that adequate funds will be forthcoming every year to enable the local Committees to maintain their existing staff, if not to increase it. They should not be liable to dismissal or be subjected to any very important change in their work except by the decision of the Committee. "Many men many minds," is proved to be true in the mission field as well as at home. The zeal of

new comers is also proverbial, but it is not always directed by wisdom or prudence, and to the fresh impressionable minds changes in methods of work and also of agents suggest themselves as advantageous before a sufficient experience has been gained to enable them to form a sound judgment as to the advisability or necessity of the changes, and so changes are sometimes made to be afterwards regretted. But the mischief is done, and good useful agents suffer from the precipitate action.

Able men disapprove of such risks, and even those in mission employ knowing that such changes may take place will not allow their sons to become mission agents.

One suggestion yet remains to be made. The necessity of a higher class of evangelists is generally acknowledged. This implies that this class of men are to receive a high class education in secular subjects and then a proper theological training. The cost of the latter has always come out of the funds of the respective Societies, but that of the former *i. e.*, of the secular course has had to be defrayed by the friends of the student. It has to be considered if something cannot be done by Societies to help promising young men to pass through the classes of our colleges. Considering the need there is for highly educated men and also the high rate of fees, &c., in college classes, it seems to be a right thing that Societies should out of their general funds, assist promising earnest Christian young men to pursue their studies till they graduate.

The members of the native church, including our native agents, are as a rule too poor to give their sons a college course. It is therefore incumbent upon the constituents of Societies to consider if the cost of the education of suitable men while in college, is not as legitimate an item of expenditure as that of the theological course. It may be defrayed from the general funds or from a special fund raised for the purpose. The guardians of each student should do what they can, but the supplement needed or the whole cost, where required, should be freely granted. In all these suggestions it is supposed that in the case of each applicant every effort will be made to ascertain that he is a sincere earnest Christian man and one that by the gift of spiritual graces as well as by natural ability seems to be called of God to this work. The presence of these qualifications should be conscientiously tested, and only where they are truly believed to be should the grant asked for be given, but it should be awarded where they are found to exist.

A serious difficulty has here to be faced and it must be encountered with unwavering firmness, while it should not be considered to be insurmountable. It is this, and it has been suggested by experience :—After

a young man has received his secular training at the cost of his Society, what guarantee is there that he will enter upon his theological course? and after he has finished his theological course what guarantee is there that he will not join another Society which may be prepared to offer him a higher minimum salary than his own Society will do?

. These questions have been suggested by the conduct of Christian young men who have acted dishonourably in the past, some from their own want of honour, and some from the absence of it in their guardians. It is not easy to guard against conduct of this kind. The sense of honour in the presence of emoluments and position is so low in the Christian Church, and the missionaries of some Societies are so ready to take men from other Societies even against the earnest protest of those that suffer that there appears to be only one remedy left, and it is to make each applicant and his guardians, before they receive pecuniary help, sign a stamped agreement that the young man will go through the whole course prescribed and will then serve his Society for a specified number of years according to the usual scale of salaries or that all the money spent on his education, &c., shall be refunded within a certain time after the contract is broken under the penalty of being legally prosecuted for its recovery. This is a severe proposal, but some protection of the kind is necessary.

To the question invariably asked when money is under consideration, 'Where are the funds to come from?' the answer is, they are to come from the Church of Christ, from the constituents of our Societies, who can without any sacrifice raise three times what they are doing at present. The Church of Christ, in His name from love to Him and for His glory, has undertaken to make known His truth to those that know Him not. They have begun this work, they have been doing it for a hundred years, and they should do it in a business-like in a God-like manner, by using the means suitable to produce the results aimed at. They should make themselves acquainted with the details with the needs of the work to be done, they should decide upon the means to be used in each district, and they should resolve that these shall always be maintained in a state of efficiency before any new field is entered upon. This is quite within their power. The church has not yet begun to think seriously of mission work. Even now it is regarded as a thing that affords some amusement by a series of annual entertainments in the Sunday school and tea meeting. It is barely tolerated yet in the pulpit or in the annual assembly of the ministers of each denomination. The subscriptions, as a rule, are the few stray pence or shillings that

there is little other use for. It is high time that each congregation and each church assembly began to think about foreign mission work as seriously as they do of political or other matters that touch their special interests. When they do this when from sincere love to Christ and from devotion to His interests they humbly and devotedly consecrate themselves to the extension of His kingdom in this and other lands the money required will be freely given, the right men will be found filled with the Holy Ghost, and the blessing of the Triune God will rest abundantly upon their efforts.*

* The paper was read at the Bangalore Missionary Conference in June

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