



BIBLE STUDY IN INDIA

BY CLAYTON SEDGWICK COOPER

THE PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS A BIBLE CLASS AT COLOMBO, CEYLON, OUT FOR A STUDY SESSION IN THE OPEN

MEMORABLE among the vivid impressions of a recent visit which I made to the students of the East,¹ is a scene in the large government university in the city of Lahore, in northern India. An audience of five hundred Hindu, Mohammedan, and Parsee students had gathered to debate a critical question in educational circles: "Resolved that religious education should be inaugurated in the government schools of India." Seated upon the platform were English professors and Brahman teachers, with some adherents of the reform movements of the Arya and Brahmo-Somaj. No one could have looked into the faces of those students, keenly alert and highly intelligent, without feeling that in such men resides the inherent and potential hope of the new India.

I had been asked to join with a Mohammedan student in leading the affirmative side of the debate. It was surprising to

note the lack of interest shown in the negative. In short, the high-caste Brahman who led the negative side whispered to me before rising that he believed in *our* side of the question, and was speaking only in order to make the debate possible. When my colleague, the Mohammedan student, cried out in great earnestness, "We are not satisfied to be graduated from these government schools merely as intellectual experts: we demand an education in religion," the assembly of students rose to their feet, and greeted the sentiment with applause that fairly shook the building.

I said to a Hindu professor who sat by me, "What is the reason for this unaccountable feeling which seems to be sweeping the convictions of these college men?"

In reply, he explained to me that the educated men of India, in their awakening to new responsibility for individual, social, and political reform, were grasping with

¹ Mr. Cooper has returned recently from a special Bible mission to the Far East. In *THE CENTURY* for last month the reader will find a paper by him entitled, "College

Men and the Bible," on the work of the International Committee, of which he is the secretary in special charge of the Bible work in educational institutions.—THE EDITOR.

almost feverish zeal every influence which had helped to shape the progressive civilizations of the West. Furthermore, he added: "You must remember that the students of India have inherited a religious consciousness. They know the Bible as thoroughly, if not more thoroughly, than any sacred book of Hinduism. They need only leadership to make this movement for the intelligent study of the English Bible one of the most popular and profitable branches of Indian education."

This Hindu teacher struck the key-note of India's need when he emphasized the necessity for leadership.

LEADERSHIP OF COLLEGE MEN

MR. JOHN R. MOTT, Secretary of the World's Student Christian Federation, has said, "The schools teach the teachers, preach to the preachers, and govern the governors." Probably this remark is truer of India at present than of any other nation. The college men are decisive factors in any movement which has to do with government, industry, education, or religion. The influence of the students of the five great government schools in the cities of Madras, Calcutta, Allahabad, Lahore, and Bombay, is out of all proportion to their number. In fact, numbers count much less in India than almost anywhere else in the world. One trained student leader of strong moral fiber will counteract the evil force of thousands of illiterate, thoughtless, and vicious men.

Furthermore, in India, as in Russia, the students are the leading reactionaries. The "unrest of India" is only another term for the awakening of the student classes. Through the streets of the cities in the province of Bengal, as well as in the towns of the Bombay district, one may hear repeatedly the significant cry, "Bande, Mataram!" ("Hail, Queen Mother India!") It is the passionate cry for national leadership on the part of educated men.

A new and great hope for India exists in the fact that the students of the empire are rallying to this world movement for the practical and intelligent study of the English Bible. In the student club-houses which are being rapidly constructed about the large universities, bands of Indian students are gathering for this discussional study in a fashion similar to that carried on in the college fraternities and clubs of

the United States and Canada. An experienced leader at the University of Madras said that he could engage as many men in the practical study of the Bible in that city as were represented in the membership of these student hostels.

It would be difficult to find a more fitting means for the Eastern student to discover the principles of Western religion than through these informal groups of Bible study. The style of the subject-matter is Oriental, and the Indian student is inclined to reach all his conclusions by the processes of Eastern thought. Dr. H. H. Mann, who is at the head of a large scientific school in Poona, told me that his students usually reached their scientific views in a roundabout way, often through the medium of speculation and religion.

Indeed, little knots of Indian and Ceylonese students may be seen in any college community strolling off, hand in hand, discussing earnestly some philosophical or religious question. These men join readily in small classes for discussion of the principles of religion and their application to the life and practical affairs of their country.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

TENNYSON's words have been true in India for three thousand years.

The individual withers, and the world is more and more.

India has systematically suppressed the individual. Collectivism in family and state has dominated her. The Indian student has inherited a slavery to a social and patriarchal system which constantly tends to deindividualize him. This emphasis upon uniformity of type has produced a fixity and a conservatism which until very recently have been well-nigh impregnable. India has gloried in her exclusiveness, in her annihilation of public spirit defying all sudden transformation. The words of William Watson, although less true of the new India, emphasize this spirit of indifference:

The brooding Mother of the unfilial world
Recumbent on her own antiquity,
Aloof from our mutation and unrest,
Alien to our achievements and desires,
Too proud alike for protest or assent

When new thoughts thunder at her mossy
door;
Another brain dreaming another dream,
Another heart recalling other loves,
Too grey and grave for our adventurous
hopes,
For our precipitate pleasures too august;
And in majestic taciturnity
Refraining her illimitable scorn.

But although India's march has always been a slow march, and her leaders have been few, a new day seems to be dawning for the development of individual qualities. It would be difficult to realize what would happen in India to-day if a few leaders of great caliber, or even one great national personality, were to be raised up "to see life steadily and to see it whole," and then with practical aggressiveness to lead this three-hundred-million host toward unity and progressive civilization.

This student activity, promoted largely by the Young Men's Christian Associations, is bending its chief effort to the development of native college leaders. In short, the entire enterprise is at present waiting only for the training of men capable of teaching and organization. An able worker in Madras said to me, "If I could have one strong leader to give his time to this matter, we could have almost at once one thousand Indian students studying the English Bible in the city of Madras." There are at present two hundred students studying in groups, similar to the American plan, in various hostels and student meeting-places of the city. Normal classes for the training of men are being formed in the great educational cities. Biblical scholars from the schools are training the Indian students to organize and to guide their fellows in small discussional groups, with the double view of character and service.

SPREAD OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

To learn English is a craze in the East to-day. It is the open door into government position, the acme of student ambition in India. It is often a surprise to Westerners to find that the lectures in government colleges in India are delivered in English. It was my privilege to speak in most of the great student centers in the Indian empire, and in no case was I asked to use an interpreter. Indeed, it is an insult to

infer that an educated Hindu or Moham-
medan does not understand English.

This pride of language was amusingly displayed at one of our student meetings. It is a national habit for men to go out and come in during lectures, according to their own sweet will. The confusion which this moving about occasions is a matter of utter disregard to them. A veteran educator who lectures much in the East had learned how to remedy this annoyance. At the very beginning of the meeting he announced in a bold voice that all students who did not understand English might feel free to go out at any time. The result was gratifying and inevitable. Every student remained in his seat, feigning great interest, even if he had it not, until the very end of the lecture.

The Bible is studied in English by Indian university students. This is true of both curriculum Bible study, which usually exists daily in the Christian colleges, and also in the small voluntary classes held in clubs and hostels. While this book has been translated into the majority of the four hundred and five or more separate languages and dialects of India, college men usually choose the English version. Indeed, many students enter the Bible classes with the sole object of learning to read and speak better English. The need of these students, in some cases, of a right combination of language and biblical facts is as apparent as we sometimes find it in the West. A teacher in Forman Christian College in northern India asked in an examination-paper the question, "Describe the incident of the wise and foolish virgins as narrated in the New Testament." A Mohammedan student wrote the following answer:

It is thus related that there were ten virgins who aspired to marry a lover of them. One day the arrival of the husband from his home to a certain place was announced to take place on a fixed day at midnight. Then all the virgins took their respective candles, but only five of them took oil with them, and set out to the rendezvous. When the lover arrived there at the fixed time at midnight, the virgins who had oil with them lighted their candles, while the other virgins vainly tried to light theirs because they had no oil. The hopeless girls asked the companion virgins for oil, but their request not

being entertained, they went to the bazaar to buy oil. On their return the door of the house was shut, and the lover had married the five wise virgins that had brought oil with their candles. The poor remnants knocked at the door, but the lover said, "I know not who you are."

This incident reveals not only the influence of Mohammedan doctrine regarding the social system, but also the honest attempt by students to become proficient in the use of the English Bible. Truly, when one appreciates that the English edition is being more faithfully read by the students of Hindustan than any of the sacred Vedas, it helps to explain the surprise of foreigners in hearing almost faultless English fall from the lips of college men in the great Indian universities.

BREAKING OF THE CASTE SYSTEM

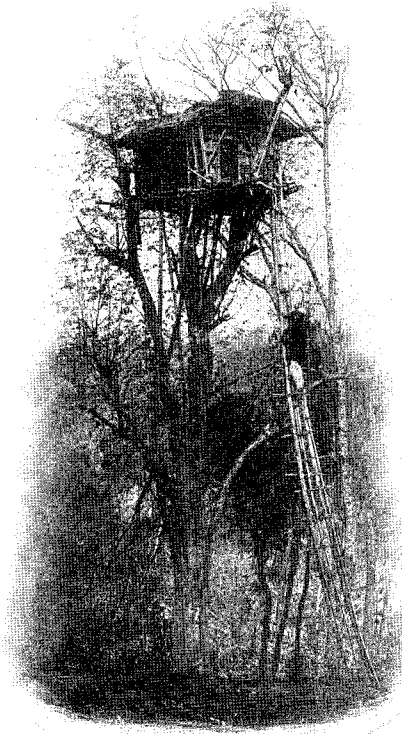
THIS practical study of the Bible on the part of students is doing much to destroy the fearful system of caste which for centuries has blocked the progress of India. Hinduism has furnished to India a religion of intellectual aristocracy to be acquired only by the elect who have time for reflection and for study. The Brahman is still saluted in the street as "great king." His caste is respected as a limited company having patents in heaven. This kind of aristocracy, like most other kinds, has had a tendency to degrade the people. A double standard has arisen, one for the people and another for the philosophers. Heathenism of the most revolting type has existed side by side with philosophic idealism. If it is true that the summit of the pyramid of Hindu religion is bathed by

the air of the ideal, it is also true that its foundation is surrounded with a deal of human miasma. One needs only to sail down the Ganges River any morning in the year to behold such examples of superstition and degrading rites as would be conclusive evidence against at least the results of the Hindu religion of caste.

The students of the East are learning from the Bible the great principles of Christian equality and democracy which are slowly but surely undermining the great oligarchic caste influence. Mr. G. Sherwood Eddy, who has been working for many years among the students of India, speaking of the disintegration of caste, described having seen in the city of Madras one hundred students, about equally divided among Brahmans, Mohammedans, and Christians, representing high and low grades of society, boldly dining together, with no man daring to put them out of caste.

A professor in one of the cities which I visited invited a number of Bible students to his home for a social evening.

There were present both Hindu and Mohammedan university men. When refreshments were served, the professor prepared two tables, in accordance with the usual custom, since the Hindu students were not expected to touch food which had been offered to those not of their own faith. It chanced that the Hindu students ate all of their cakes, and, being still hungry, inadvertently remarked to their host that they would not object to a second helping. After investigation, the professor found that all the cakes had been served; whereupon the Hindu students, perceiving that there were still refreshments remaining



From a photograph, copyright, 1908, by Underwood & Underwood
A TREE-DWELLING IN THE TIGER-INFESTED
JUNGLES OF INDIA



A TYPICAL BIBLE CLASS AT COLOMBO, CEYLON

upon the tables where the Mohammedan young men had been eating, suggested that the Mohammedans' cakes would be quite satisfactory. The professor, astonished, said, "But you are Hindus." The answer came from a bright-faced Brahman of high social position: "We have changed our view somewhat in relation to this matter as we have studied together the principles of the founder of Christianity concerning his social order."

I was not a little surprised and impressed when an Indian scholar to whom I had applied for the objective of present-day caste tendencies of educated men in the East, replied in the following significant verse:

Strike hands my brother-man!
'T is yours with voice, and act, and pen,
'T is yours to paint the morning red,
That ushers in the grander day;
So may each unjust bond be broke,
Each toiler find a fit reward,
And Life sound forth a truer chord.

THE AWAKENING OF CONSCIENCE

AN old, white-haired Brahman came to me in Calcutta, after a public meeting of students, and said, "Is 'stir the conscience' an intelligible use of English?" I assured him that it was. He replied: "India's conscience has been dead for centuries, at least along certain lines. The Bible will stir the conscience of India."

The men in the institutions of higher

learning in India are no longer idol-worshippers. They do not countenance the superstitious rites at Benares. In short, it is doubtful whether many of the Ganges devotees themselves are consistent believers in their cult. To seem thus religious I paid a man two rupees to lie on a spike-bed. Many of the so-called devotees pose as religious for the photographer or for revenue only. There is critical concern on all sides for the awakening of a keen ethical sense in distinctions of right and wrong. Dr. John P. Jones affirms that "the root of India's present incapability for self-government is not intellectual, but social and moral." Indeed, no self-government worthy of the name can possibly result until the character of India becomes firm and steady enough for a foundation. There is a feeling among many that the greatest use of the Bible in the East is along the line of an awakening of personal, moral responsibility, for Herbert Spencer's words are applicable here, "Institutions are dependent on character; and, however changed in their superficial aspects, cannot be changed in their essential natures faster than character changes."

The awakening of India's conscientious nature is revealed in a new attitude toward social and domestic reform, especially toward marriage. Until comparatively recently it has been impossible to obtain a serious hearing before a student body upon questions concerning the home, so skeptical have been these men as to the binding character of moral laws relating

to social conduct. Even now, to be sure, virtually all the students one addresses in the colleges are married, but the marriage relation is being set further on each year, and while students are betrothed at an early age, the educated Indians are becoming more and more averse to the early marriages of their sons and daughters.

This change of the accent of religion from ceremonial to morals and conduct is affecting not simply the physical life of students, but its bearing is seen directly in a most timely fashion in business, politics, and the general trustworthiness of men of affairs. Mark Twain, speaking of truth-telling, said:

I never could keep a promise. I do not blame myself for this weakness, because the

fault must lie in my physical organization. It is likely that such a very liberal amount of space was given to the organ which enables me to *make* promises that the organ which should enable me to keep them was crowded out. But I grieve not. I like no half-way things. I had rather have one faculty nobly developed than two faculties of mere ordinary capacity.

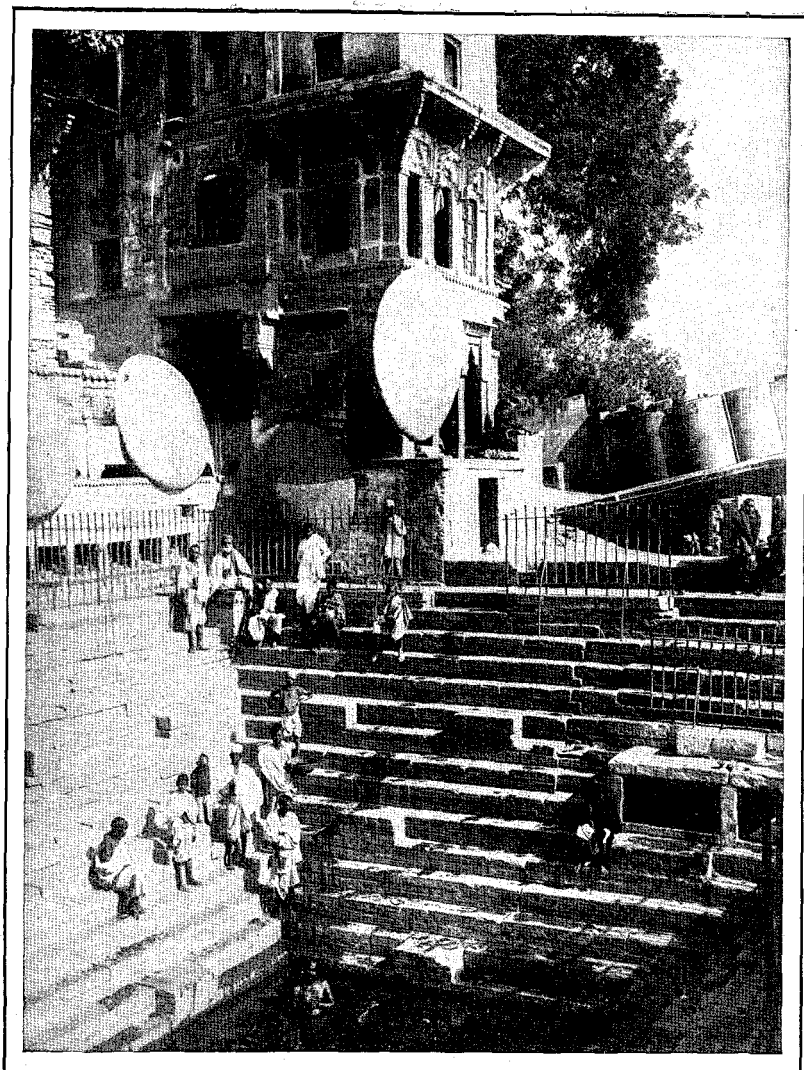
Those who have had to do business with certain types of people in the East might be inclined to place some of these persons in Mr. Clemens's category of successful specialists.

But it is in this very commonplace but important realm of truth-telling, self-control, honesty, and personal righteousness, that India looks for emancipation through



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STUDENTS FOR THE BUDDHIST PRIESTHOOD, AT THE DALADA MALAGAWA
TEMPLE OF THE TOOTH, KANDY, CEYLON



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HINDU PILGRIMS BATHING IN THE SACRED WELL OF THEIR GOD VISHNU, ON THE NORTH BANK OF THE GANGES, NEAR BENARES

the Christian's Bible and the Christian's sacrifice. The "carrier doves of commerce," which now spread their wings over every ocean and inland sea of Asia, must leave something better in the East than the germs of contagious social ills and vulgar materialism, otherwise the present unrest of the Indian may well cause grave alarm.

Something very definite is required, and this practical plan to get together groups of thinking men throughout the country to study with serious sense of obligation the high laws and invigorating ideals of the Bible, and then to send them out to

fulfil their new aspirations in alleviating the conditions of their people, is one tangible and sane method by which to hasten India's real and deepest reform.

Irrigation plans will help. Palliative measures of Lord Morley will do much. The forces are indispensable which make for new learning—great railroad systems, unexcelled British justice, and modern scientific improvements; but in the East, as in the West, emancipation of mind and body without the mastery of soul is only half-freedom. Indeed, it is too often "poking the fire from the top." With the "Aryan Brown," as with the Anglo-

Saxon, the kingdom of God is within, and final judgment of any people must be made in accordance with what the individuals of that nation are in themselves, and according to the moral and religious restraints which they put upon themselves.

An Oxford man who was conducting a most profitable work for students in connection with the government college hostels at Allahabad, told me of a Hindu student with whom he had been privately reading the Bible for over a year. He had not mentioned to the student the subject of his personal acceptance of Christianity. He had noticed, however, certain changes in the student's life. At the beginning of the second year of study, he asked his Hindu scholar what impression he had gained from his reading. He answered, "The influence I have gained is not one of thought merely; it has changed my life and my life-work."

MOTIVE TO SERVICE

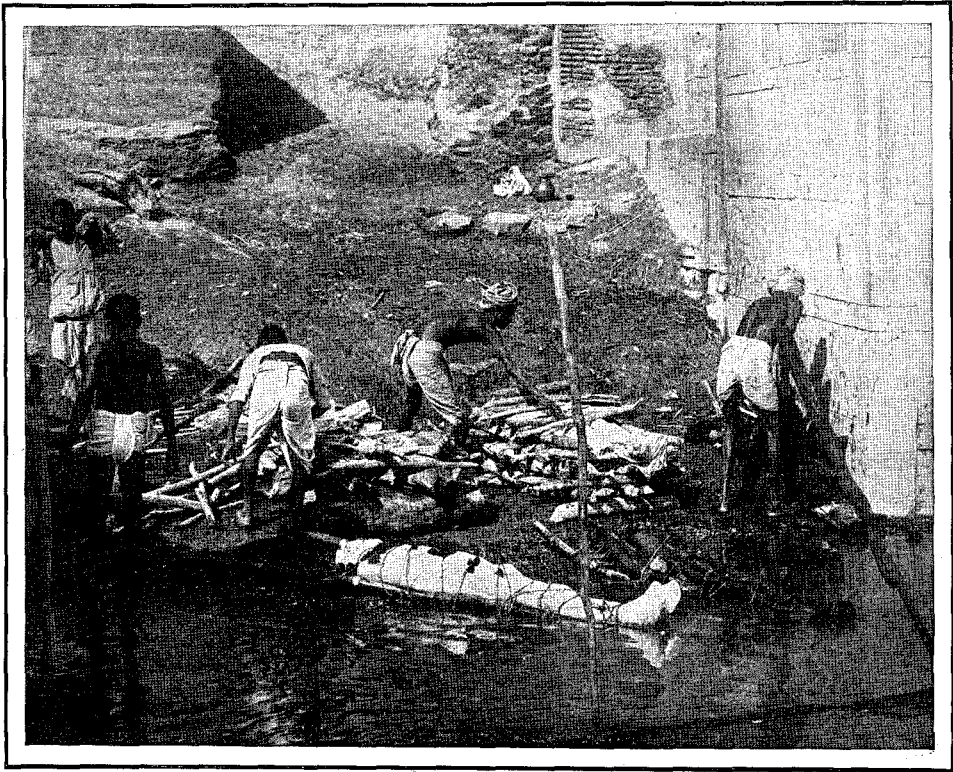
THE supreme need of India at present is

self-forgetfulness in a great service. Her conservatism and uniqueness have existed in a proud Oriental quietism. She has been satisfied to live in her past. In Matthew Arnold's words:

The East bowed low before the blast,
In patient, deep disdain;
She let the legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again.

For thirty centuries India has been turning her gaze into her own soul. Religion has been spent upon itself. Contemplation rather than action has been the objective. In short, religion in India has been a disease, another name for egoism. Men's souls have become burdens to them, as usually happens with those persons who give disproportionate attention to self-examination and introspective spiritual self-development.

India's hope to-day is in positive participation in great altruistic enterprises. She needs to make her religious and spirit-



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PREPARING HINDU DEAD FOR INCINERATION

The dead are first placed, as here, in the waters of the Ganges, at Benares, with the object of attaining heaven.



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DEVIL-DANCERS, CEYLON

ual development a product, or a by-product, of her life of service. Christianity must take to her a living faith, a stimulus to a life of deeds. Brahmanism, with its doctrines, has swept India too far out into an indefinite sea of mystical metaphysics to leave her with much practical standing-ground for every-day life. This movement for Bible study is certain to bring to thinking men the truth that neither books, ceremonies, nor men can stand before serviceableness. Even now the student life of India is rapidly evolving from the air of the monastery into the atmosphere of a community where human life and human service are touched with a new moral enthusiasm.

The fact that talk divides, but work unites, is dawning upon the student mind of India. That great army called the

Omédvár (hopefuls) who fail to receive official positions in the government, passing their time in idleness, have become a national menace. Indeed, student education may be a bane rather than a blessing in the East if it is not speedily attached to altruistic and definite tasks.

In the city of Calcutta during a series of Bible studies conducted a few months ago by a Yale graduate who is accomplishing a great mission in southern India, great crowds of students listened for hours to the exposition and interpretation of the Christian religion. At the close of one student session 300 college men, representing for the most part the higher classes, signified their desire actively to associate themselves with a life of Christian service. One student in that number whose grandfather was a killer of missionaries broke

up the devil-worshipping society in his own college, and is now helping to unite his fellow-students in definite, utilitarian, and Christian enterprises.

COSMOPOLITAN INTEREST

GLADSTONE said that educated men establish a telegraph of the mind. For centuries Indian students, in their supreme self-content, have been shut away from the great student world. The universal element of power in the Bible, and the world federation of college men for its study, are causing the college men of the East to lift their eyes to other student nations for ideas and ideals, for precedents and for methods. The students of India are feeling for the first time that college comradeship, based upon the solid ground of a common ambition toward high ideals and large thoughts for the betterment of humanity. It is said that there is a tacit understanding between old soldiers who have fought on the same battle-field. One feels an intellectual understanding which challenges analysis when one meets with the students of Bombay and Calcutta as truly as one senses it in Tokio, Peking, London, or New York.

This wide-spread awakening of 80,000 students in eighteen different countries to the voluntary study of the Bible is drawing large bodies of recruits from the Sons of

the East, and its reaction upon these Oriental college men is of no small moment.

The principles of the Bible, when once grasped, bring into thought and action general interests. Charles Studd, the English athlete, said that England was good enough for him until he began to study the principles underlying Christian happiness and Christian philanthropy. Indian students are studying with genuine interest in the New Testament the biography of the great Oriental Teacher. This study is opening the way for that breadth of sympathy with other nations which is made possible through the outgoing impulse of a great international campaign.

An American college man who has been intimately associated with the promotion of Bible interest among students of the United States and Canada is soon to sail for India, there to be the National Student Bible Secretary for that vast country. No one can measure the cosmopolitan significance of such leadership. Institutes for the inception of successful developmental and propagating agencies will be planned for all parts of the Indian empire. Indian students will be sent with increasing numbers to great national gatherings to inspect the plans of other nations and to give vent to their growing desire to escape from a mere selfish evolution and stagnant isolation. Moreover, students from the East now studying in the colleges and universities of North America are becoming interested in the exercises and methods of this study among our educated men. Plans for the training of these men are being made in order that they may go back to their country not as spectators, but as leaders in the new order of events toward what Professor Nash calls, "the eternal worth while." All of these occurrences will surely be direct influences in bringing in the time when, as Kipling says:

There is neither East nor West,
Nor border, nor breed, nor birth,
Where two strong men stand face to face,
Though they come from the ends of the earth.

[Mr. Cooper's third paper of this group will be entitled "Bible Study in the Far East," and will deal with the work of the Bible extension movement in China, Japan, and Korea.]

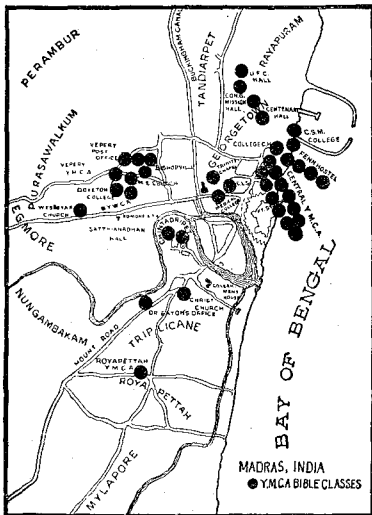


CHART OF MADRAS, INDIA

The black dots indicate the number of Bible classes in different parts of the city and suburbs.



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JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER. PAINTED BY WILLIAM M. CHASE