



Smithsonian Institution

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

The People of India, Volume Eight

Extracted on Jul-09-2025 02:44:52

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GROUP OF CHRISTIANS.—KARENS.

"Within a year after the annexation," says the *Friend of India*, "the American missionaries in the Tennasserim Provinces resolved to visit Toungkoo, once the capital of the kings of the district. There, beginning in 1853 with the Karens, they laid the foundation of a work which Saw Quala, a native, carried on with ardour. In January, 1853, was the first baptism; at the close of the year there were nine churches with 741 converts. In May, 1856, there were thirty churches and 2,124 members. Colonel Phayre writes in his official report (1859), there are 20,000 professing Christians out of a population of 50,000, building their own churches, paying their own native ministers, raising their own native schools, and contributing for the Christianity of their own heathen brethren. Their language has been mastered and reduced to writing, the Bible has been translated, and a Christian literature created, village schools have been established, and male and female normal institutes erected. In these institutes teachers and preachers are trained in theology, philosophy, mathematics, and land surveying; while the females learn plain sewing, cooking, washing, and general cleanliness, together with nursing and the training of children."

Such is a plain statement of the early progress of the Karens in civilizing influences, which must inevitably have largely increased since 1859; and we regret that we have not materials with which to furnish details up to the present period; but it can safely be said that no instance of a like prosperity and advancement can be found among other wild tribes of the same character, or one which promises to effect larger and more important results among the surrounding population of British Burmah.

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