

matter, and she gasped out that she had been lying there ill for five days, with no one to look after her, and nothing to eat. She was a low-caste woman, and I had great trouble in getting bearers to convey her to the dispensary. No one in the village would do it for money, and there was no one of so low a caste. I did not like to force them, so I had to tramp off to the distillery, where I found people of her village and her caste—two men and two women—and got her taken off to the dispensary. Poor woman, her frame, as she was lifted on the cot, was little better, if at all, than some of the worst I ever met in the famine days. It was very providential my going that way at all. Usually I come home on my tricycle, but this morning the chuprassy had forgotten to bring it, and I took the short cut home through the village. She reached the dispensary alive, but I fear she will never leave it alive. I knew that unless I saw her started she would never get there. It was a sad sight of how selfish and cruelly indifferent man can be. The poor creature had lain there, as the man admitted, for four days and four nights. Because she was a low-caste woman, no one stirred to help her, but went on with their ordinary avocations, without one atom of curiosity as to when she would die.

Caste cancels the great law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and substitutes for it the command, "Thou shalt love thy fellow caste-man and none other."

The Swinging Festival in India.

BY MRS. A. J. MARSHALL.

During a short stay at Metrapore we learned that this festival would take place only two miles away, so we decided to witness it. It is held in the service of, and at the behest of, Mohadeb, one of the very vilest of Hindu deities. It has been suppressed by government in all territories under its direct control, but here and there, where a petty rajah reigns, it is still observed. Those who are to swing are selected by their villagers. They all gather where a brahman presides over the worship of an image of Mohadeb. Flowers are placed on the top of the image, and as one falls down, it is a sign that the worshippers must swing, or take some other part in the festival.

Those who are to swing are prepared for it by having a portion of the muscle below the shoulder blade taken up and a hole pierced with a hot iron, into which hooks will be subsequently inserted. Others have holes pierced in the flesh on the sides, to allow of ropes being passed through, while others fix in the places thus burned the pointed ends of a couple of instruments similar somewhat to fire shovels, which are crossed and fastened at the crossing by a string that passes around the neck. Fire is made on the shovel-like ends, and with this fire flaring up into their faces, they dance about in a most hideous fashion. The week following the burning of the holes in the flesh is spent in begging, fasting, and worshipping, until the last great day, when the swinging actually takes place.

Starting about 4 p.m., we walked through a long stretch of low jungle until we had passed all signs of villages, and came to an open, rocky place near the foot of a range of hills. Here was erected a heavy post some twenty feet high, at the top of which was a cross bar so arranged as to allow of its being moved round and round on the upright post. In connection with this was scaffolding high enough to enable one to reach the cross bar easily from its top.

Passing this we went on to the river near by, where the chief actors were being prepared. Here, after bathing they were being dressed in most gaudy colors. The last touch to their costume was a flaring turban trimmed very showily with flowers. This done, they joined the group, the centre of which was an old devotee of Mohadeb. This man with a little red paint daubed on his forehead, his hair dishevelled, hanging half-way down his back, was screaming, jumping, dancing around and around, trying evidently to keep up the excitement to the highest pitch. Around him were dancing those who were to swing. In a short time one after another had the iron hooks with ropes attached hooked into the holes burned the week before. Not a bit of flinching did we see, but that it was no light matter to have a wound seven days old opened anew, was shown by the way in which they contrived to bear it. One in particular we noticed, in order that he might better bear the pain, locked his arms tightly around his fellow, while he did likewise, as the irons were being inserted. It reminded one very much of the way one grasps the arms of a dentist's chair when a tooth is to be drawn. The hooks once inserted, an attendant with each grasped the cords close to the hooks, and the two went off into an awkward dance around the assembled group of worshippers. Soon all, about twenty-five, were ready, and the crowd moved toward the post and scaffolding. One at a time they ascended the scaffolding, were bound by the cords to the cross-bar, and swung about once. As they were going about they would throw out arms and legs as though flying, scream and tear off the turban, scatter the flowers in it, put it on again, and then be taken down to make place for another. The flowers scattered were eagerly caught by the crowd below, who took them home and treasured them as trophies. Among those who swung were two little boys not more than eleven years old. They bore the pain with pride. The blood was trickling down their backs, but not a murmur did we hear.

About half the number had swung when my husband prevailed on them to put an end to the painful proceedings, and the crowd dispersed. Right glad were we that enough light had entered their minds to show them the evil of their way. It is for us to give them still more light. — *Missionary Helper*

Heathen Women.

"O would it were even," they murmur.

And restlessly look toward the sun
With shadowy, sorrowful faces.

Before this day's life is begun.

The fear of their heart is a burden,

The sight of their eyes which they see

Is dim as the light in a window

When seen through a dense vapour

"O would it were morning!" they murmur.

And heavily look toward the west,

While one of the gods that they worship

Is quietly sinking to rest.

Their hearts are too heavy for slumber,

And el-seed in a destitute den,

They restlessly moan in the stillness

"O would it were morning again!"

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THE consciousness of duty performed gives us music at mid-night. — *George Herbert*.