

children, one of whom, a lad of about twelve years, was ill and much emaciated. I charged him with eating dirt, which he denied; but he admitted that he sometimes drank rum and red wine. A young man passing declared however that he ate dirt, and he then admitted the truth.

This dirt-eating is a curious and very injurious habit. In some cases it is probably begun, to gratify a normal craving caused by ill health. Women very often fall into it. But in a great many cases it seems to be learned by imitation. The Estates in this district which lie along the foot of the Mountain are more plagued with dirt eaters than those on the lower levels although from being more healthy the opposite would be expected. The reason seems to be that a species of soft blue stone is found by the streams which tempts to the habit and encourages it at first when it needs encouragement. When confirmed it leads its victim to break up pipe stems and gravel and eat them. When confined in hospitals and denied these, they eat the whitewash off the walls.

We have here an illustration of the danger of temptation from facility of access. Soft pencil stone conveniently near with the example of a few eaters leads others to eat till a *habit* is formed—a new want created, a disease excited—which intensifies the craving till pipe stems and whitewash are not too strong for the depraved desire. Wonderfully alike is the case of strong drink. Wine and malt on the table to create the appetite, leading on to “all sorts” at the bar—the mild leading to the malignant: the temptation at home and at the street corner multiplying virtues. And the end in both is the same, unless turned from degradation and death.

Yet the human race is not a failure. God's love yet broods over our lost world. His gospel with its matchless grace and inimitable morality brought home to the heart by the renewing spirit makes new creatures of the degraded. While therefore God's plans ripen slowly and there are many things we know not now and may never fully know, there is no room for doubt as to our duty to make known the gospel. And ultimately the great results of redemption will doubtless far exceed our largest hopes and transcend the brightest visions of our dreams.

JOHN MORRIS.

Letter from Mr. Christie.

Couva, May 13th, '82.

Dear Mr. Scott:

I send you a copy of the “Trinidad Royal Gazette” in which you will find a petition which is very interesting to us here. As you will see it is from the Musselmans of the Island to do away with the Taziya. This is the grand festival of the year among them, and the Hindoos also join very largely in it for the fun of the thing.

The festival has several times been referred to by the missionaries in writing home. The origin of it is quite fully detailed by Gibbon in the chapters on Mohammedanism where he recounts the pathetic story of the death of Husan.

This was the beginning of the schism which still divides Mohammedanism. The Arabs referred to in the petition, I believe, are convicts banished from Algeria to the French convict station in Cayenne or French Guiana, and have found their way here.

The festival is kept up here on a grand scale, and many of the shrines that they make and throw into the water are really magnificent.

It is an anxious time, however, for those in authority, as the people are excitable and difficulties have several times arisen as to which Estate should take the precedence in the procession. Ten years ago there was a serious riot in Couva, in which two or three were killed and many others were badly hurt. Few will be sorry to see the festival stopped. The movement has started among themselves.

We are pretty well now. Mrs. C. has been having some fever and ague occasionally, I am feeling stronger but have to be careful about overwork.

The rainy season has set in. It is a few days earlier than usual.

We received through Mrs. Morton the parcel of clothing from the Ladies of United Church, I do not know the name of any of the officers of their society and I hate to ask you to please convey to them our warmest thanks for their kind gift. It was very acceptable and was exactly what was wanted both in material and in style.

Yours, &c.

T. M. CHRISTIE.

Subjoined is a copy of the above named petition.