

The whole continent of Asia is corrupt. It is the scene of barbarities, tortures, brutal punishments, oppression, official corruption, which is worst under Mohammedan rule : of all things which are the natural products of systems which are without God in Christ. There are no sanctities of home ; nothing to tell of righteousness, temperance, or judgment to come, only a fearful looking for in the future of fiery indignation from some quarter, they know not what ; a dread of everlasting rebirths into forms of obnoxious reptiles or insects, or of tortures which are infinite and which are depicted in pictures of fiendish ingenuity.

And then one comes to what sickness is to them. If one speaks of the sins, one is bound to speak of the sorrows too. The sorrows of heathenism impressed me, sorrows which humanitarianism, as well as Christianity, should lead us to roll away. Sickness means to us tenderness all about us, the hushed footfall in the house, everything sacrificed for the sick person, no worry or evil allowed to enter into the sick-room, kindness of neighbors who, maybe, have been strangers to us, the skill of doctors ready to alleviate every symptom—all these are about our sick-beds, together with loving relations and skilled nurses ; and if any of us are too poor to be nursed at home, there are magnificent hospitals where everything that skill and money can do is provided for the poorest among us. And, besides, there are the Christian ministries of friends and ministers, the reading of the Word of God, the repetition of hymns full of hope—all that can make a sick-bed a time of peace and blessing enters our own sick-room ; and even where the sufferer has been inpenitent, He “ who is able to save to the very uttermost ” stands by the sick-bed ready even in the dying hour to cleanse and receive the parting soul. In the case of the Christian the crossing of the river is a time of triumph and of hope, and “ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? ” sounds over his dying bed.

But what does sickness mean to millions of our fellow-creatures in heathen lands ? Throughout the East sickness is believed to be the work of demons. The sick person at once becomes an object of loathing and terror, is put out of the house, is taken to an outhouse, is poorly fed and rarely visited, or the astrologers or priests or medicine-men or wizards assemble, beating big drums and gongs, blowing horns, and making the most fearful noises. They light gigantic fires, and dance round them with their unholy incantations. They beat the sick person with clubs to drive out the demon. They lay him before a roasting fire, till his skin is blistered, and then throw him into cold water. They stuff the nostrils of the dying with aromatic mixtures or mud, and in some regions they carry the chronic sufferer to a mountain-top, placing barley balls and water beside him, and leave him to die alone. If there were time, I could tell you things that would make it scarcely possible for any one beginning life without a fixed purpose to avoid going into training as a medical missionary. The woe and sickness in the unchristianized world are beyond