

## SEEKING FOR RELIEF FROM SIN.

By Jacob Chamberlain, M.D., D.D.

Never shall I forget an interview that I had over thirty years ago with a venerable Brahman pilgrim, an earnest seeker after relief from the burden of sin. It was in February, 1861, that two of us missionaries were out on a preaching tour, in a part of the Telugu country lying on the edge of the Mysore Kingdom, a region in which the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ had so far never yet been proclaimed. Our tent was pitched under a spreading banyan tree. We had been there for several days, and had preached in all the villages and hamlets within three miles of our camp. That morning we had left our tent before sunrise and gone out several miles to preach in a cluster of villages nestled in among the hills.

In each village, after the oral proclamation, we had offered Gospels and tracts in their own tongue to the people who had listened, but only a few would receive them, so suspicious were they at that time of anything new. We returned to our tent weary with our morning work. The burden of our thoughts was: "Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

As we came near we saw a venerable Brahman engaged in his devotions on a large stone platform around the central trunk of an adjacent banyan tree, where there was a small shrine. Slowly, with beads in hand, he performed his circumambulations, keeping his face toward the shrine, reciting his mantrams, his prayers, his petitions. Each time that he came in front of the shrine he fell prostrate upon the ground, performing the Sashtangam of the Hindoos, and then, sliding one bead on his rosary, he would slowly and reverently go around the tree again.

Much struck by his reverent demeanor and evident earnestness, we watched him through the corded meshes of our tent window, and when he had finished his devotions and sat down to rest, we went out and, courteously addressing him, asked him what he sought by these prayers and circumambulations.

"Oh, sirs," said he, in a tone that struck us as one of intense earnestness, "I am seeking to get rid of the burden of sin. All my life I have been seeking it, but each effort that I make is as unsuccessful as the one before, and still the burden is here. My pilgrimages and prayers and penances for sixty years have all been in vain. Alas! I know not how my desire can be accomplished."

Then, in answer to our inquiries, he gave us the story of his life. He told us how, in early life, he had been sorely troubled by the thought of his unexpected sins; that his parents had both died when he was seventeen years of age, leaving him, an only child, sole heir of their wealth; that the priest whom he had consulted told him that if he would give all his property to endow a temple the burden of sin would be removed.

He gave his property—all of it. He endowed the temple. But the burden of sin was no lighter. His mind was not at peace. Obedient to further advice from the priest, his counselor, he made the pilgrimage on foot all the long way to Benares, the holy city. He spent two years in the precincts of the temple in worship. He spent two years in bathing in the holy Ganges. "But," said he, "the Ganges' water washed the foulness from my skin, not the foulness from my soul, and still the old burden was there un-eased." He told us how he had gone thence, on foot, all the way to Rameshwaram, begging his food all of the two thousand miles, for he had given all of his money to the temple; and thence, again, to Srirangam, and thence to other holy places. He told us how he had spent his whole life in these pilgrimages, and in penances and in desert wanderings, apart from his kind, living on roots and nuts and jungle fruits, remaining for years at a time in the forest jungles, in the vain search for relief from his sin.

"And now, sirs," said he, "my life is almost gone; my hair is thin and white; my eyes are dim; my teeth are gone; my cheeks are sunken; my body is wasted; I am an old, old man; and yet, sirs, the burden of sin is just as heavy as when, a young man, I started in pursuit of deliverance. O, sirs, does your Veda tell how I can get rid of this burden of sin and be at peace? Our Vedas have not shown me how?"

How gladly did we tell him of our gracious "Burden-bearer," and of his loving call: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How eagerly did he listen, as we told him of Jesus Christ, the God-man, the Saviour of the world, and told him what He had done for our salvation! How gladly did he pore over the Gospels we gave him, and what earnest questions did he ask, during the day, as to points in their teachings which he did not quite understand! During that night he left, and went upon his way, taking the Gospels with him, and we never saw him again.

Though so many years have intervened, his