

## MISSION FIELD.

## OUR BROTHERS IN DISTRESS.

INDORE, May 26th, 1897.

DEAR FRIENDS:—You know how disappointed we were that the action of the Government of the Central Provinces hindered us from getting the children we had arranged for at Damoh and especially so as the missionaries living there believed it would be impossible to get any till the Government there should resolve to close their Orphanages—that anyone trying to save children exposed himself to the charge of kidnapping. It was very trying to see such a needy field so near us and yet to feel that our hands were tied.

Central India—in contrast to the Central Provinces, which is British territory—consists of a number of Native States more or less independent of the British Government, but under control of the Agent (Governor-General at Indore. It generally lies to the north of the Central Provinces; but is almost cut in two by a projection from the south of the C.P. and from the north of the North West Provinces. That to the east of this projection is called Bundelkhand and Baghlekund and here the famine has been very bad from the first; but to reach it we would have to go through the C.P. and travel a distance of between 400 and 500 miles. That to the west of the projection is called Malwa. We believed that a famine had never been known and we certainly did not know till a very short time ago that there was any so near us. In a way that it is hard to account for the facts of the famine are very much concealed. At the very time that the people in the C.P. were dying in thousands the Commissioner refused to see the need of any help and denied the existence of any famine. This famine in Malwa has been going on for about three years and has been very severe for the past year and a half. We at once called a meeting of those within reach to consider the matter,—Rev. Dr. Smith of Mhow and Miss Duncan of Neemuch together with all of the Indore staff,—and I was appointed to go to find out the state of matters, to give such immediate help as seemed necessary and to get as many orphans as I could. The southern base of this famine area is met with about 180 miles to the north east of us on the regular trunk road between here and Agra. As it is a good road I proposed at first going on my wheel; but I soon found that it would be unwise in the great heat to expose myself so much and went on by train.

The scenes were over again those described in my trip to Damoh. In going along the main road of the town a man was seen lying dead, and every morning 10 or 11 men were picked up dead. Not a hundred yards from the Rest House and in the heart of the town one of the Christians found a woman and child—the last of a family of six that about two weeks before had come there—apparently dying, who had not tasted food or water for three days. The mother we succeeded in bringing round but the baby died the next day. In going through the town thousands were to be met with hunting in the dust heaps and garbage for any stray grain or refuse that could stave off the terrible craving for food.

About a year and a half ago the British officers there started a subscription and opened a Relief Camp where about 500 were daily fed. All this time the native officials knew of no famine. When the number coming for relief became too great Col. Masters brought the matter to the notice of Maharajah Scindia who at once gave Rs. 75,000 for this purpose ordered Relief Camps to be opened and all arrangements to be made for the relief of the sufferers; but he had to depend on his native assistants and so his good intentions were by no means properly carried out. Those able to come get help that will tend to prolong life; but those not able to come are dying by thousands all over that sad country. Col. Masters of the C. I. Horse has ordered his cavalymen to patrol the roads leading into Coona and to bring in all not able to go further, and so now the native police have been led to make a similar move on a small scale; but not at all on the scale needed to meet the difficulty.

The Relief Camp at Coona consists of an enclosure about 300 yards square surrounded by a rough hedge of dried thorns. On one side are a number of huts made of grass, open at both ends and in shape like a triangle. Their condition must be a very trying one in the rains and there is sure to be a heavy mortality. Each is supposed to get twice a day enough to keep life in; but in many cases it is just prolonged misery till death does its work.

In the Relief Camps several things strike one:—

1st. What a large proportion are of the professional begging class and how few of the poor villagers. It is not hard to distinguish between the impudent brazen face and long drawn out whine of the professional, and the hopeless, silent, sad look of the poor villager.

2nd. How few of the boys and girls of from 10 to 18 are to be seen there. I did not see one single girl between these ages. When you know that girls are constantly being shipped from there

by the Hindoo and Mohammedan residents of Agra and Delhi it is easily understood.

3rd. How much more wasted are the women than the men and the children than either. The weakest go to the wall first and one of the sad features of the famine is the way it destroys in so many all human feelings and relations.

The Maharajah had forbidden the removal of any children from the Relief Camps and his officials tried to hinder us from taking them even when found outside; but to this we paid no attention and gathered together in a few days 32. One blind boy came to us one day and after his first good meal begged to be allowed to go to hunt for his sister. About noon the next day he came back in triumph leading the wee tot of about three. Their history was the history of many others. Father and mother with their two children left their home for Coona, when all at home was eaten. The parents both died and left these two to battle a little longer. They had become separated and so for a while day the wee girlie of about three had managed for herself. Had we not found them in all probability in a few days more they would have afforded a meal for the jackals that to-day are enjoying a rich harvest. Two of our Christians have gone back again and will I hope bring back a larger number.

We were forced to leave sooner than we intended on account of the interference of the vile characters that watched for a chance to get a hold of our girls—some of whom were over ten years old. Women would complain to the officials that we had carried away their children and only when there was no doubt of it would they give up their howling and lying. The so called Holy men tried to frighten the children by saying we were appointed by the Government to gather these children that they might be made a sacrifice to the Queen this year; or that a number of children were needed to put under a new railway bridge; and when we stopped on a railway bridge on our journey here the children began crying out with fear as they supposed we had stopped to throw them over.

It was so hot that I could not do much except in the morning and evening but I had with me two of our new Christians, who agreeably surprised me by their faithful, patient, kind care of those poor children—a marked contrast to the inhuman conduct of the Hindus and Mohammedans about them.

It is said that the Government of the Central Provinces is about to close their orphanages. The Hindus and Mohammedans will be given the first choice but the Missionaries do not expect them to do much and so it is probable that all the Missionaries will have large numbers of children offered to them. I am glad the friends at home have subscribed so liberally that we shall be able to bear our share when opportunity presents itself. What grand possibilities are involved in it?

The famine is going to be a very powerful agent to overthrow Hinduism. Children in thousands are being taken out of that fold; the love and sympathy of Christians is strikingly made manifest and contrasted with the inhuman conduct of so many of the old religions; caste distinctions are being in many cases destroyed—for though some will rather die than eat what to them is unclean, in a far greater number the craving for food overcomes all prejudices and considerations; and in not a few cases they are led to think about God and eternity with an earnestness not before seen. May Christians be worthy of the opportunity. Yours faithfully,

J. WILKIE.

## LOOKS INTO BOOKS.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD READ IN THE JULY MAGAZINES.

- "John Cabot." By the Marquis of Dufferin, in "Scribners."  
 "The Century's Progress in Physics. Part I. the 'Imponderables.'" By Henry Smith Williams, M. D., in "Harpers."  
 "The Churches of Poitiers and Caen," with pictures by Joseph Pennell. By Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, in the "Century."  
 "Homewood"—A Model Suburban Settlement. By Dr. E. R. L. Gould, in "Review of Reviews."  
 "The Housing of the English Poor." By Lord Monkswell, in the "North American Review."  
 "Forecasting the Progress of Invention." By W. Baxter, Jr., in "Popular Science Monthly."  
 "How Grandmother Met the Marquis de Lafayette." By Ella Shearman Partridge, in "St. Nicholas."  
 "Literary Reserve." By Mary E. Gorham, in the "Book Buyer."  
 "Fatalism in Fiction." By Margaret Sherwood, in the "Book Buyer."  
 "Prof. Henry Drummond." By Rev. D. M. Ross, in "McClure's."  
 "The Landing of the Emigrant." By Joanna R. Nicholls, in the "National."