

REV. MR. RUSSELL'S WORK IN MHOW
1892-93.

DURING the past year there has been an advance in Mhow all along the line. New stations have been opened and new fields explored; additions have been made to our schools both in attendance and teaching proficiency. New workers have been brought in and our little Christian congregation has increased in numbers.

One of my first duties on my return from the hills was to get our new building for Church and Girls' School begun. The work has gone steadily on ever since, and I am now able to report to you the completion of a handsome and strong building which I trust will serve the purpose of a Church to our Native Christians and school for our girls for many years to come. The main room is nineteen feet high and will make an admirable audience hall for our Native congregation.

The ever increasing attendance at our boys' school in the bazar has demanded considerable attention this past year. We began in 1892 with a roll of less than fifty and it has increased during the year to more than 100. The boys have come to us to be taught knowing that ours is a Bible School. We have refused positively to employ the enticing system of introducing the Bible gradually or making the study of it optional. Every boy must attend the Bible class from the first day he enters the school, and though we have driven away a few boys I believe the rule to be a workable one.

We have got a wonderful amount of Bible knowledge into the minds of the boys. Some of them can tell every incident in the life of Christ as well as the story of the Acts of the Apostles. All know the origin of sin and the means of salvation in Jesus Christ. And I feel quite satisfied to keep up our school work for the purpose of daily instilling such truths into the minds of more than one hundred boys. Most of them attend the Sunday School, all can sing our hymns some knowing as many as fifteen by heart.

Our school in Guzarkheri we carried on till a few months ago, when as the attendance was decreasing by the promotion of some of the boys to our bazar school in the camp, and as I found most of the others could walk the short distance there I closed the school.

That in Kockarpura is still continued with a fair attendance, though it has not accomplished the object as yet for which it was started: namely the winning of the village to Christ. However we still labour on, knowing that He is faithful who promised. We have opened a boys' school in connection with our out station at Berwai but of this more later.

Ever since my arrival in Mhow it has been much laid on my mind that the old method of

working from Mhow was not in any adequate measure reaching the great tract of country to the South-West and East of us comprising probably 1,000,000 souls. I felt that we must "enlarge the place of our tent and stretch forth the curtain of our habitations. Early in the rains therefore I began to explore after a suitable place for an out-station from which as a centre we might reach a new circle of villages.

I visited and was much impressed with Berwai, a town about thirty six miles South of Mhow on the R. R. line. Our temporary work there resulting in the conversion of a young Mahratta of much promise, we felt the more encouraged to take permanent hold of the place. It commands a circle of about thirty villages, the town itself having a population of nearly five thousand. I have placed two Christian families there, the men preach morning and evening in the villages, carry on a school, Sunday school and Church, the women visit the homes and zenanas. Miss Fraser has also opened Medical work and the Christian men distribute simple remedies.

In one of the most hopeless villages near Berwai, Nanu a drum player, was converted and we trust from present appearances that he is only the first of many who shall come from the same class and district. I am able to supervise all the work myself by spending the day there occasionally. I have also visited a number of the surrounding villages and find the people very attentive and respectful. The occupation of Berwai gives us control of the whole district between Mhow and the Nurbudda, the southern limit of our field.

Berwai settled, we next turned our attention to the West. Manpur a town of about 4,000 people twelve miles from Mhow was settled on us, being not only a good centre for village work, but right on the edge of the Bheel country, a people among whom we have long desired to gain a footing. Manpur is a British village, and its leading inhabitants, the magistrate, doctor, teacher and postmaster, are all friendly. Here also I have placed two Christian families.

The district is not as full of villages as Berwai, but the Bheels in the neighbourhood are numerous and approachable. I have been over most of the ground myself on foot, as the roads do not permit of a gari or in fact a horse in some parts. The Bheels, though timorous at first and especially at the sight of a foreigner, have been eager listeners and some of them have already asked for baptism. I look for a grand harvest there soon.

I was in hopes I might be able to report to you the establishing of a third out-station at Maheswar or Mandalesar, but circumstances have hindered this being done. From present appearances however this will be the next place of set-