

A Heathen Festival.

IV. HOW WE PARTICIPATED IN IT.

Dear Boys and Girls of the Mission Bands:—As we witnessed all that went to make up this heathen festival, Paul's words in Eph. 6:12 were impressed on me as never before: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places." But when we descended those temple steps to make war upon that citadel of Satan, another message was given, namely: "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." I Kings 6:16. "Be not afraid or dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's." II Chron. 20:15. Then we realized that it was not we three against twenty-five thousand, but the Divine Three, the Almighty God, the loving Christ and the ever-present Holy Spirit opposing Satan and his host. How thoroughly humble we were to be on the Lord's side, and to have a humble part in this great battle of the ages!

Encouraged, strengthened and inspired by this thought we returned, and having selected a suitable spot just outside of the village, where we hoped to catch the comers and goers, we took our stand in the name of our Lord and Leader. Here the magic lantern did good service. Again and again a clear picture on the Life of Christ, thrown on the large white screen, would attract the passers by, and hold the attention of those already gathered, when any earthly spoken message would have entirely failed.

It was 11 p. m. when we began to herald the glad tidings of great joy. Our audience of six persons soon increased to as many hundred. Some were intoxicated with toddy, others with excitement. Many remained only long enough to hurl insults at us; some longer, to argue against all the good we were preaching. Others, however, were really interested, and seemed pained at any disturbance that interfered with their hearing our message. It was after 2 o'clock on Sunday morning when we showed our last picture. It was of the Christ, and is called "Warning and Invitation." In it the Saviour is represented as standing with outstretched hands, extended to welcome all who would come unto him. On his brow is the crown of thorns to remind of the shame, the wounds and the death he suffered for sinners. In his countenance is pictured that mysterious combination of love, pity, mercy and justice, appreciated only by his friends. As we directed that thoughtless crowd to him, "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," we could almost hear him say to the Telugus as he once said to the Jews, "How oft would I . . . but ye would not."

While we were emphasizing the great love of Christ and the awful results of rejecting him, a man came forward and said, "I want to be saved, please tell me how." Such a request is not unusual. But this inquirer seemed unusually sincere. This led us to indulge the hope that he might accept Christ. What a joy to us if even one of that great gathering would whole-heartedly turn to the Lord then and there! But such was not to be. Little by little as the conversation proceeded his hypocrisy became manifest, and finally he threw off the mask and showed his true colors, which proved him to be a hater of truth, a mocker of the living God, and a veritable child of the evil one. This hypocrite furnished material for our last message, a solemn warning to all. And then tired out, our throats aching and two of us so hoarse that we could scarcely speak above a whisper, we retired to our tree. But we could not sleep, because Satan's devotees did not discontinue their ruthless revelry until sunrise. Then, as the noise gradually died away, the village began emptying itself of its thousands. Into the large tanks near by they plunge and perform their sacred bath. Then they scatter in all directions to prepare their morning meal, and now they may break their fast which has continued a day and a night.

In the meantime we took make our toilet, and sit down around God's open word to partake of our spiritual food. Then we open the lunch box and feed the physical man.

At about 8 o'clock we provide ourselves with Bibles, books and tracts, and start off to visit the village again. Guriah and Appalarasiah go in one direction, I in another. Not being very successful in finding hearers, I at length enter the main street where we were the night before. What a different appearance it presents now! Not more than a hundred people are visible. A few rods from the temple steps is a little group of people evidently much interested about something. As I approach I see they are in front of the Brahmin's dwelling-houses. The Brahmins are there by the dozen. Look at them! Beardless faces, closely shaven heads and fat bodies! Scrupulously clean, uncommonly intelligent, shamefully idle and wickedly wily, they cannot be mistaken. Just now they appear greatly excited. Perhaps you can guess the cause, for standing between the common people assembled in the road, and their proud priests the Brahmins seated on the verandah we see the Christian preachers. They are in a hested discussion with these lords (?) of creation. All is confusion. A dozen are talking at once, and no one can understand

anyone. So I venture to assume the position of moderator, and suggest that the Brahmins appoint one of their number as their spokesman, and at the same time name Appalarasiah to represent us. Appalarasiah begins by stating that practical Hinduism is harmful, and that the Hindu scriptures do not present to sinful man a pure God or a pure teaching. He does not proceed far, however, before he is interrupted, and several volleys of red hot ridicule are hurled at him. The preacher simply smiles at their scathing sarcasm. But at this stage our opponents are plainly told that we came there neither to abuse nor to be abused; that ridicule however polished it may be is not reason; and, moreover, that if they continue the discussion in this unkind spirit we will take no further part in it. Here the scoffing ceased, and for nearly two hours our dear brother, in a truly masterful manner, argued with this educated Brahmin, proving as he started out to do, that Hinduism utterly lacked a pure gospel and a pure God; and that it was absolutely powerless to lift sinful man to a holy life, and assure him of eternal salvation. Then he turned to the Christian's Bible and the Christian's Christ, and in the spirit of the Master emphasized the purity of our teaching, and the power of our Saviour to transform character and to save from sin. As we again sought the shade of our friendly tree, I thanked God for the morning's victory, and for the human agent through whom he had glorified himself.

At 2.30 that afternoon we left Ramateertham to return to Raiga, our tenting-place. True, we were physically tired and our heads were aching on account of the heat and glare of the sun, but our hearts were far sorer than our heads, and more weary than our bodies. For some time we all were silent. Then Appalarasiah spoke: "If only we had baptized one thousand of those people today, we would not think of our weariness," and then he said sadly and half to himself, "Will such a great day ever come for my Telugu brothers?" This led to a long talk about the apparently helpless condition of the people, and the great hindrances to their becoming Christians. Humbly speaking, their way to Christ is blocked by barriers which no power but God's can surmount or remove. He alone is able to cast the mountains into the midst of the sea, to fill up all the valleys, and bridge all the gulfs and to make the dead to live.

In conclusion let me remind you dear boys and girls, that you, one and all, have a part, and an important part too, in the deliverance of these people from the bondage of idolatry. And let me ask you if you will not earnestly pray God to hasten the time when such heathen festivals as I have very imperfectly described, will be forever a thing of the past, having given place to sane, soul-satisfying, God-honoring worship of himself through his own Son our Saviour.

His and yours,

Bimlipatam.

R. E. GULLISON.

Besetting Sins.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

Let us lay aside every sin which easily entraps us, and so wraps us round as to trip our feet and cause us to stumble. That is a very fair rendering of the first verse in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews. In our common version it reads, "The sin that doth so easily beset us." A besetting sin is the one that chimes in with a person's strong inclinations. Does he love mirthfulness? Then he must be careful lest he run into excessive levity, and play the harlequin. He will be tempted to make jests of sacred things, and to crack jokes on serious occasions. A minister ought not to be a monk; but neither should he be a social comedian.

Does a man love ease? Then he always interprets those providences in his own favor which allow him to shirk hard work, and swing in his hammock. Does he love flattery and eclat? Then he is tempted to covet applause, and to imagine that he is serving God when he is only burning incense on the altar of self-worship. The ardor of love may easily kindle into unholy passion, and become "hot coals of fire" in the bosom. The most dangerous enemy is the one which wears a fair face and has a smooth tongue. Look out for selfishness! It is the "old Adam" lurking behind every hedge. It will always keep pace with you if you give it the upper hand. Make no league with it; for Christ will never abide in the same heart with that subtle and greedy tyrant. A Christian is never safe, never strong, and never true to his Master unless he is constantly "collaring" every sinful and selfish lust, and forcing it into unconditional surrender.

The test question which Jesus Christ proposes to every one at the very start is this—will you lay aside the sins that easily beset you, and follow me? Will you make a clean break with sinful practices? The sin may be very dear; it may have ensconced itself in your heart; no matter, put it away! While the love of any sin remains, the heart cannot love the spotless Saviour. There is no room for both; Christ will not accept one corner, and leave Satan the "chief seats" in the soul. "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye search for me with all

the heart." If a true Christian life is a race, then no one can win it if handicapped with besetting sins. Here is one cause for shallow conversions and stunted religion; they began with a compromise with favorite sins. The old encumbering weight was not laid aside, the entangling and entrapping garment of sin was not stripped off. If this article falls under the eye of any one who is awakened and anxious to begin a real Christian life, I would say to him or her—pray for a deep conviction of sin, and, with the Spirit's help, for a thorough uprooting of evil principles, inclinations and habits. Unless you "abhor that which is evil," you will not "cleave to that which is good." A true follower of Christ must not only do a great deal of sincere loving, but also a great deal of honest hating. Dr. Johnson used to say that he liked a good hater. Until you so hate sin as your real enemy, and as Christ's enemy that you lock it out, there will be no room for Jesus to come in and dwell in your heart. The weeds must come out before the good seed can take root in the soil of your soul. It makes no odds what the sin or sins may be that so fatally beset you. A man may be crushed by an avalanche, or he may be poisoned by an atom of strychnine; each one takes life; and the sin that keeps you from Jesus, takes your soul's life for this world and the next!

The command to "lay aside every weight" means that you are not to take up with a cheap and easy religion. Some preachers and teachers in their desire to commend the freedom of the gospel offer, the simplicity of the faith-process, hold out the delusive idea that "it is the easiest thing in the world to be a Christian." These rose-water teachers make no allowance for the weakness of human nature or the power of the adversary, or the surrounding multitude of temptations. Such false preaching is pretty sure to either hoax its recipient into self-deception, or to make him a crude half-converted professor to the last. Of such shallow experiences, grand old Samuel Rutherford said, "Many people only play with Christianity and take Christ for almost nothing. If ye never had a pained soul for sin, ye have not yet lighted upon Christ. But if ye would quit all the world for him, that proveth that the work is sound." Jesus himself put repentance before faith, for he knew that no man could cleave to his sins, and lay hold on a divine Saviour with the same hand. The only effectual repentance is to lay aside the sins that entrap you; the only effectual faith is to begin with the Spirit's help, to keep Christ's commandments. "Looking unto Jesus," says the Apostle who wrote this direction how to win the race. That is the secret of success after all. Looking unto Jesus! The one sure way and the only way to get sin out of our daily lives is to, get sin out of our hearts; the only effectual way to do that is to admit Christ Jesus there. Looking unto Jesus! A victorious life is no child's play. We won't get to heaven on a feather bed. The grip on Jesus loosens the grip of sin; and every mile on the race-course brings us nearer to the crown.—Evangelist.

Extracting the Sweets From Life.

BY REV. CHARLES A. S. DWIGHT.

Life is bitter-sweet. It is neither all bitter nor all sweet. It is a blend of many flavors, an interweaving of many strands. It requires the cultivated taste to detect the fine flavors, it takes the educated eye to discern the lovelier tints. Christianity develops this sense of the beautiful, this instinct for what is admirable and noble. Plato, that high-minded Greek, had of old some inkling of this, as expressed in his famous formula of "the true, the beautiful, and the good," but it was left to Christianity clearly and fully to reveal the wisdom and wealth of a life devoted to "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report."

It is perfectly true that there is the bitter in life, and a great deal of it, too. This bitter element in existence is the streak of sin which has passed into the mass of human nature. Sin is gall and wormwood wherever it comes. Sin can never be sweetened. It is a subacid, it is always vinegary, always an acidulator. Yet it is not well to enlarge too much either in thought or speech on the bitter and tart elements of life, but to dwell more upon the sweetening and sanctifying forces that are at work upon it. The sweets are there if we can only extract them, there is honey in the comb if we can only get hold of the comb. It is the province of the gospel to tell us how to get the sweets out, that is by putting the sweets in. We obtain from the world largely what we bring to it. If our hearts are full of the ennobling grace of God we find that in a spiritual sense everything we touch turns to gold. A positive spiritual force is needed to replace the bitter elements that now are so plentiful in human speech and society. Says Professor Drummond in his booklet, "The Greatest Thing in the World," "Souls are made sweet not by taking the acid fluids out, but by putting something in—a great Love, a new Spirit, the Spirit of Christ." This has been the great work of Christianity in the world, to sweeten souls, and so to sweeten society. Tertullian records that anciently, among the heathen, professors of Christianity were