

and ourselves in better humor and condition for study. Yet as we enjoy the refreshing sea-breezes here, we do not forget those in Samulcotta and Cocanada, where the heat is close and oppressive day and night. The hot season is in Cocanada, but we are not there.

J. R. STILLWELL.

Pentacottah, May 6th, 1886.

The Story of Ummama.

In a village just across the river from Tunj much evangelistic work has been done by our native preachers and by Martha, the Bible-woman connected with this station. As a result of Martha's efforts, about a year ago, a certain Shudra woman, named Ummama, became deeply interested in the truth taught. From the time she first heard the Gospel she embraced every opportunity of gaining a fuller knowledge of the way of life, coming frequently to our meetings, and soon gave evidence of sound conversion. On my return from Canada in July, I heard of her case, and found that she was ready and anxious to be baptized. A few weeks passed before her baptism, the delay arising from hesitation on the part of the church, rather than on her part. Not that any doubt was entertained as to the genuineness of her conversion; but as her baptism would be sure to be followed by more or less domestic persecution, and perhaps expulsion from her home, it was hoped that something might be done towards conciliating her husband and gaining his consent to the step which she contemplated. Meanwhile she came regularly to our meetings, and listened with earnest attention to the preaching of the Word. In August she was baptised, and received into the fellowship of the church. When her husband learned what had happened he ordered her to leave the house, and take care of herself. She declined to go, protesting that that was her home, and she intended to stay. Her brother, who lives in another part of the same village, came and very angrily ordered her away, telling her she must never think of coming near her friends again. She told him that his family need not visit her, and she wouldn't trouble them; but she did not intend to leave her home. Intense feelings were aroused against her among her caste neighbors, and she was subjected to no small amount of angry abuse and denunciation. She remained, however, through it all, notwithstanding the efforts that were made to drive her away. Finding that words were unavailing, her husband determined to starve her out, and refused to supply her with food. She then tried to support herself by doing a certain kind of cooly work (cleaning rice) for her neighbors; but they would give her nothing to do. She undertook to buy rice, clean it, and offer it for sale; but no one would buy from her. She was refused shelter inside her husband's house, and for some time was obliged to pass her nights on the verandah. This continued until she became ill, probably through exposure of this kind during the rainy season, when Martha remonstrated with Ummama's husband, and persuaded him to allow her to stay within doors at night. Though this privilege was granted, he still refused to give her food. Rather than see her suffer we had to come to her relief. She was offered a home on the mission compound, but preferred to remain where she was, believing that if she once left her home, to live anywhere else, she would never be allowed to return. She seemed filled with religious zeal and fervor, and though continuing to live among her own people, she occupied her time in assisting Martha in evangelistic

work. For some time the ill will of her neighbors seemed to be abating; active persecution had almost ceased, and it was hoped that she would be able to live permanently in her husband's house, and at peace with those about her. But this hope was doomed to disappointment. The persecuting spirit revived, and manifested itself in various ways. The whole family (including husband and daughter) were put under the ban. Ummama was not allowed to draw water from a well near their house, where she had been accustomed to obtain it for years. Large stones were thrown into their yard by invisible parties, evidently with malicious purpose, some of which fell very near the daughter while sitting at the door. The husband's business was boycotted, and became unremunerative. And it was evident that their neighbors had formed a settled purpose to drive them away. They stood it as long as they could, but finally had to yield. So at a certain time, afraid to remain any longer, they left their house, and sought refuge in the mission compound. I was on tour at the time, and found them here on my return. And here they are still. Under the circumstances it would seem less than Christian to refuse them an asylum. Several months ago the daughter professed conversion, and united with the church. Within a few days the husband followed the example of wife and daughter, and was received on profession of faith. Ummama, when well, does good work as a witness for the truth. She is evidently a woman of more than ordinary ability and strength of purpose; and of the depth and sincerity of her faith it seems impossible to doubt. Though without education, I have no doubt she will prove, if spared and blessed with health, a valuable helper in our work among the women. The husband has been ill for some time, but is slowly recovering. After his health is sufficiently restored, he may, perhaps, be able to do something again at his former business—weaving. The daughter, a widow, eighteen years of age, will probably be sent to the boarding school in Cocanada at the beginning of the next term, in August. Since coming here, the parents have both had so much sickness that they could not well dispense with her help.

The trials which this family have had to endure in consequence of their change of religion may well awaken the hearty sympathy of all who become acquainted with the facts, and I hope they will be remembered in the prayers of those who read this communication. They have been obliged in a certain sense to give up all for Christ, and I trust they may be enabled to realize that their spiritual gain is abundant compensation for all their temporal losses.

The experience of this family illustrates to some extent the tremendous difficulties that beset the introduction of Christianity among caste people. When it is known that all caste converts are liable to persecution of this sort, or worse, it cannot be surprising that so few have courage to openly confess Christ. In speaking of the caste system as an obstacle to mission work in this country, some one has described it as the master-piece of Satan; and probably no Indian missionary would hesitate to endorse this verdict. It stands right across our path, and resists our progress at every step. Even among non-caste people the caste spirit prevails, and hinders to a greater or less extent, our work there. May God hasten the time when this gigantic system of iniquity and oppression shall be overthrown, and the truth shall have free course among all classes of the people.

G. F. C.

Tunj, May 12, 1886.