

RESCUE WORK AMONG TEMPLE CHILDREN.

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I have been asked to tell the story of the beginning of the work among Temple children. It is a very simple story.

On March 7th, 1901, our first Temple child was given to us. Before that, we knew there were Temple children, for we often saw them playing about the Temple women's houses. But we knew nothing more. After Pearl-eyes came she told us much about Temple life, and the desire to reach these little ones grew strong in us. We enquired among Christians and Hindus as to the best way to do something for them, but we were always told nothing had been done, or could be done. The Temple women, sometimes the children's own mothers, oftener their adopted mothers, valued them far too highly to part with them. We found this true. Several times in our itinerating work we came across such children and tried hard to save them, but always in vain.

In the Autumn of 1903 my comrades, Mr. and Mrs. Walker, had to go to England, as Mrs. Walker had broken down. After this I was much alone with the Lord Jesus, and a sense of His great beauty grew upon me so that I did not know how to bear the thought that so many see no beauty that they should desire in Him. "Oh pity that Fairness hath so few lovers!" This sense of the loveliness of Jesus, His reality, His nearness, Hisself, became so vivid that it was as if the veil between grew very thin, and one could enter a little into His thought about things. And it was then that the burden of the little Temple children pressed so heavily that one could not bear it any longer.—Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? And the answer came quite distinctly "Search for those little lost lambs with Me." So the work began.

At first the difficulties seemed insurmountable. Very few were interested in the Temple children—nobody thought it possible to save them. No one knew how to set about it. I did not know either, but step by step the way has opened before us. The first encouragement was the quickened interest shown by one of our evangelists. He had been itinerating in North Timnevelly, and when he returned I told him what the Lord Jesus had said to me. He looked very much surprised, and told me how for the first time in his life he had seen Temple women and children out in the streets at night; how it had stirred his heart; and how he and the pastor who was travelling with him had felt the shame of it, and the sin. "The sight penetrated us, it pierced us," he said. By comparing dates I found that the week of my waiting upon God was the week when the pastor and evangelist saw this sorrowful sight. I had asked him to lay the burden upon our Indian fellow-workers, without whom one could not hope to do much; and He had done it. The evangelist wrote at once to the pastor, whose letter by return of post told us of a baby, who when she was only four

months old, was taken to a Temple known to him. He set to work to save that little one, and soon had the joy of sending her to us.

OUR FIRST TEMPLE BABY.

But still some of us were uncertain as to whether we were meant to give ourselves largely to this sort of work, and as I wanted all to be sure, I asked for a sign. Just about that time we heard of a little Temple girl who could be redeemed for Rs. 100. More than that had been spent upon her, and we had to choose between paying down that Rs. 100 or seeing her absorbed into the Temple service. The circumstances, as is usual in such cases, were such that nothing could be done through legal proceedings. We could not refuse to redeem her, and we paid the Rs. 100. This was a very large sum to us, and to pay it away like that was a test of faith. I looked over my account book and found I had never once received Rs. 100, neither more nor less, and I felt it would confirm the word that had come to me, in such a way that my dear Indian fellow-workers would understand, if that sum exactly were sent to us. So I asked for it. A few days afterward it came, that sum exactly. I wrote asking the giver how it was that she had sent exactly that. She answered that she had sat down to write a different sum, but had felt impelled to write the cheque for exactly Rs. 100. We always call that cheque

OUR GIDDEON'S FLEECE.

We found as we got further and further into the work that the trade in children is very extensive. An experienced American missionary, the only missionary I have so far found who is conversant with the facts at all, told me that little infants are constantly adopted by Temple women, and that if we are to save them we must be willing to take the trouble and expense involved in mothering such tiny things. A baby, I find, costs quite twice as much as a grown up person, and is much more than twice as much trouble! But God has given our Indian fellow-workers such love and patience and pity for these little ones, that they are willing to bear the weariness of broken nights, and the constant demands upon time and strength, and I think they do love these little ones "according to the love of the Lord." No other love is any use.

We find that sometimes children are dedicated to the Temple because of some vow. For instance, the father is ill. The mother vows that if he recovers she will give one of her children to the god. He recovers, and the child is given. Sometimes the gift is hereditary. A certain child in a certain family all down the generations is regarded as belonging to the god. Sometimes a child is given in order to escape from some entanglement. A man marries out of caste and is out-casted, he soon tires of the inconvenience, gets rid of his wife, dedicates his child, is reincasted and marries again. Sometimes a poor widow, or a deserted wife, is faced by the impossibility of marrying her child suitably. She "marries her to the god." The service is recruited in other