

Our Work Abroad.

LETTER FROM MISS HATCH.

BOAT "ELIZABETH," MARCH 9th, '05.

MY DEAR MRS. DAVIES :

We are on our way back from a great "Teerthum" or Bathing Festival, and as our good boat "Elizabeth" did such valiant service I thought you would like to hear about it. We started out from R. on Thursday night, after making provisions for our absence and getting stocked with water and other necessities. We were ten, all told, when we started, but we picked up some on the way and met others there so that our party numbered over twenty-five altogether. Some were teachers, some were Bible-women, some were voluntary workers and some were the men workers. We had to go a very round-about way, for the water was very low in the canals. Dr. Joshua took a holiday and came too. We reached a town early in the morning and so could get fresh meat and vegetables, which was well, for it was almost impossible to get anything to eat there. Joshua treated the crowd to a feast of meat and vegetables. We, ourselves, got a double supply and with fresh coolies we were off again, almost doubling on our tracks, as we had gone up the canal in the night, we were now going down another way.

I was reminded of excursion times at home all were jolly and looked forward to seeing the big fair. Merchants bring their wares from all over the country to these fairs and make big sales. If it were only a fair and not a religious affair, it would be to us, too, quite enjoyable.

I had my monthly women's meeting in the boat that day while travelling, but just at the last, the meeting was broken up in rather an unseemly fashion, for a crowd of monkeys appeared on the canal banks and all wanted to see them. These were not part of the fair, we always see them at this place. In the late afternoon, we passed a beautiful part of the winding canal with high green banks on either side, well shaded with trees, and across the bank on one side, a view of the great Godaveri, as it moves at this time of the year slowly to the sea. Joshua wheeled in ahead of us to call on a Brahmin patient in a village on the canal. She, with several friends came to the boat and paid us quite

a visit, bringing fruits and cocoanuts. She also sang one or two hymns for us while some Brahmins who were on their way to the festival listened in astonishment outside, for this is the Brahmin woman I mention in my report. In passing the lock, the women with me who had been following the boat along the bank, had already found hearers, and the hymns they sang sounded so sweetly in the evening air, as I sat and listened. We passed on, had our evening worship, when several prayed for the success of our visit to the fair. We didn't arrive till early next morning, being two nights and a day on the way. Oh, the noise and the crowds and the shouting and tom-toming and drum-beating. It seemed almost deafening as we woke at sunrise. We had callers before we could get our coffee and people were all round about us thick. Only by closing all the venetians had we any privacy.

We then hurried with our coffee and started off, making our slow way through the crowds loaded up with Bible-portions, tracts and leaflets. About ten of us went all in one direction, preaching to this one and that one in the way, and giving out our tracts and leaflets. The road was lined on either side with beggars of all descriptions, lepers, blind, deformed, maimed. One boy sat in a basket, showing his stumps of legs red and sore, his feet gone, but closer examination showed these were only false legs to draw the compassion of the crowd, his own feet and legs being tucked safely under him inside the basket. The bathers were returning in all states of dress and undress, wet-ness and dry-ness, some wringing at their clothes as they came along, and others trying to hold them against the wind to dry. Arriving at the great sandy beach we saw the priests standing in the water waiting for their devotees, with their bags slung across their shoulders in which they carefully deposited the copper or silver deposited by each one. It was surely worth a copper to have 10,000,000 sins washed away at one stroke, for that is the meaning of this festival. Besides the washing away of sins there were all sorts of other performances. An intelligent looking man was busy at the feet of a Brahmin making a little pile of sand, putting on that some grains of rice and sprinkling saffron, the Brahmin blessing